



**WATFORD
BOROUGH
COUNCIL**

CABINET

2 March 2020

7.00 pm

Town Hall Watford

Contact

Sandra Hancock, Democratic Services Manager

democraticservices@watford.gov.uk .

01923 278377

Publication date: 21 February 2020

Cabinet Membership

Mayor	P Taylor	(Chair)
Councillor	K Collett	(Deputy Mayor)
Councillors	S Johnson, I Sharpe, M Watkin and T Williams	

Agenda

Part A – Open to the Public

1. **Apologies for absence**
2. **Disclosure of interests (if any)**
3. **Minutes of previous meeting**

The [minutes](#) of the meeting held on 20 January 2020 to be submitted and signed.

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.

Non key decisions

5. **Ombudsman Complaint** (Pages 4 - 10)

Report of the Group Head of Democracy and Governance

This report sets out a decision made by the Ombudsman.

Key decisions

6. **Sustainability Strategy Part 1:2020 TO 2023** (Pages 11 - 66)

Report of the Energy and Renewal Surveyor

This report sets out the Sustainability Strategy and its roadmap from 2020 to 2023.

7. An Allotment Strategy 2020-2025 (Pages 67 - 100)

Report of the Head of Parks, Heritage and Culture

This report sets out an updated strategy from 2020 following a consultation exercise.

8. A Green Spaces Strategy for Watford - mid term report (Pages 101 - 200)

Report of the Head of Parks, Heritage and Culture

This report provides an update on the strategy's action plan.

9. A Tree and Woodland Strategy for Watford (Pages 201 - 236)

Report of the Head of Parks, Heritage and Culture

This report introduces the Tree and Woodland Management Strategy and identified actions.

10. Watford BC Corporate Plan 2020 (Pages 237 - 258)

Report of the Group Head of Corporate Strategy and Communications

This report provides the draft Corporate Plan. Cabinet's recommendation will be forwarded to Council for approval.

Agenda Item 5

Part A

Report to: Cabinet

Date of meeting: Monday, 2 March 2020

Report author: Group Head of Democracy and Governance

Title: Ombudsman Complaint

1.0 Summary

1.1 Under the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 the Monitoring Officer is legally obliged to report all findings of maladministration (now referred to as fault) by the Ombudsman

1.2 On 13 January 2020 the council received the final report of the Ombudsman in relation to a complaint about the Building Control Service. The Ombudsman's decision is attached as Appendix 1.

2.0 Risks

2.1

Nature of risk	Consequence	Suggested Control Measures	Response (treat, tolerate, terminate or transfer)	Risk Rating (combination of severity and likelihood)
The council does not comply with the Ombudsman's decision	The council gets a bad reputation with the Ombudsman	The council complies with the recommendation	treat	1
The council does not learn the lessons from this complaint	Further findings of fault by the Ombudsman	Building Control replies to complaints more promptly and shares this decision within the team	treat	1

3.0 Recommendations

3.1 That the decision be noted.

Further information:

Carol Chen

carol.chen@watford.gov.uk

Tel: 01923 278350

4.0 Detailed proposal

- 4.1 Under section 5A of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 the Monitoring Officer is legally obliged to report any findings of maladministration (now referred to as fault) by the Ombudsman.
- 4.2 On 13 January 2020 the council received a final report from the Ombudsman relating to a complaint regarding the Building Control Service. The decision can be found at Appendix 1.
- 4.3 Whilst the complainant made a number of complaints the Ombudsman only upheld two. The first related to an offer to refund the Building Control fee where the officer had no authority to make such an offer. The second related to the time taken to reply to the stage 2 complaint. The Ombudsman was satisfied with the council's replies to how it had dealt with those two issues.
- 4.4 The Head of Development Management comments in relation to lessons learned from the complaint that Building Control Surveyors and Technical Support staff have been briefed as to the correct process and response to complaints and the procedures and authorisation process for refunds and claims against the Council. Processes have been reviewed to ensure complaints are dealt with within the times set out in the council's complaints policy.
- 4.5 The Ombudsman's office now publishes all decisions on its website.

5.0 Implications**5.1 Financial**

- 5.1.1 The Shared Director of Finance comments that there are no financial implications in this report

5.2 Legal Issues (Monitoring Officer)

- 5.2.1 The Group Head of Democracy and Governance comments that all finding of maladministration must be reported to cabinet or the relevant committee.

5.3 **Equalities, Human Rights and Data Protection**

5.3.1 There are no equalities, human rights or data protection implications in this report.

Appendices

- Ombudsman's decision

Background papers

No papers were used in the preparation of this report.

The Ombudsman's final decision

Summary: Ms F complains on behalf of her father, Mr D, about the actions of the Council's building control team. There was no fault by the Council in its inspections or in issuing a completion certificate. The Council wrongly offered a refund of fees, raising Mr D's expectations, and delayed dealing with the complaint. It has already apologised to Mr D, which remedies the injustice caused.

The complaint

1. Ms F complains on behalf of her father, Mr D, that:
 - a) The Council did not advise him in November and December 2017 that different roof tiles were needed for his single storey extension
 - b) The Council wrongly issued a building completion certificate in January 2018
 - c) An officer wrongly advised him he would refund the building control fees
 - d) The Council delayed dealing with his complaint.
2. Ms F says as a result, Mr D has had to carry out expensive remedial works and that he carried out further building works on the assumption the refund would be made.

The Ombudsman's role and powers

3. We investigate complaints about 'maladministration' and 'service failure'. In this statement, I have used the word fault to refer to these. We must also consider whether any fault has had an adverse impact on the person making the complaint. I refer to this as 'injustice'. If there has been fault which has caused an injustice, we may suggest a remedy. (*Local Government Act 1974, sections 26(1) and 26A(1), as amended*)
4. We cannot question whether a council's decision is right or wrong simply because the complainant disagrees with it. We must consider whether there was fault in the way the decision was reached. (*Local Government Act 1974, section 34(3), as amended*)
5. If we are satisfied with a council's actions or proposed actions, we can complete our investigation and issue a decision statement. (*Local Government Act 1974, section 30(1B) and 34H(i), as amended*)

How I considered this complaint

6. I spoke to Ms F about the complaint and considered the information she sent and the Council's response to my enquiries.
7. I sent Ms F and the Council my draft decision and considered the comments I received.

What I found

8. Most building work requires Building Regulations approval. The regulations set standards to ensure the health and safety of those people in or around buildings. Building regulations approval may be given by council building control officers.
9. As building works begin, the building control inspector will visit at various key stages to check on works. These include: the floor and ceiling joists; roof timber/trusses; fire safety and glazing regulations; and staircases. But they are not present for the great majority of the project, they do not act as a "clerk of works" and are not responsible to the developer if things go wrong.
10. After taking all 'reasonable steps' to satisfy itself that the regulations were met, the council can issue a completion certificate. This is not a guarantee of works meeting the required standard.
11. Primary responsibility for ensuring building work meets the required standards lies with those who commission the work and those to do it. Losses caused by faulty works, including failure to follow the regulations, is likely to be a contractual responsibility between the parties (usually the owner and builder) and so ultimately resolved in the civil courts.
12. The courts have established that councils are not liable for the cost of putting right defective building work if they fail to properly inspect works to ensure compliance with the regulations. (*Murphy v Brentwood District Council [1990]*)

What happened

Building control inspections

13. Mr D started building works to make alterations and build a single storey extension on his property.
14. The building control officer inspected the roof structure on 17 November 2017. He noted the pitch of the rafters was 17.5 degrees and spoke to Builder 1 about the roof tiles. The case records say the roof tiles that had been ordered were not suitable for the pitch and Builder 1 had agreed to change the tiles. The Council says at the inspection the officer was introduced to a gentleman as the owner and also informed him of the need to change the tiles. The officer therefore did not write formally to the owners about the roof tiles. Ms F disputes this, she says the inspector did not tell Mr D the tiles were wrong.
15. Builder 1 walked off the job and Mr D engaged a new builder. Ms F contacted the Council and there was a site meeting on 17 December 2017 to discuss outstanding points and previous inspections. Ms F says the Council did not tell Mr D about the roof tiles.
16. A second building control officer visited on 3 January 2018 and met Mr D and Builder 2. There was evidence of water ingress around the rooflight, Builder 2 explained the leadwork had not been cut into brickwork to provide weatherproofing. The officer visited again on 19 January 2018. All remedial work had been completed and only the electrical certificate was outstanding. The

Council says on both visits there was a visual inspection of the roof from garden level. On receipt of the electrical certificate a completion certificate was issued on 29 January 2018.

Problems with roof

17. In the summer of 2018, the extension's roof started to leak. Mr D employed Builder 3 who found there were problems with the roof. A building control officer visited in August 2018. Ms F says he told them that the inspections had not noticed that the wrong roof tiles had been used and that he had not checked the file notes before the 3 January 2018 visit. The officer said this had been an error and he would refund the building control fees, which were approximately £750.
18. Ms F says on that basis, Mr D employed Builder 3 to repair the roof and that Builder 3 charged a higher price than usual because a refund was anticipated.
19. The Council wrote to Mr D on 14 August 2018 to say it was in fact unable to reimburse the fee as Builder 1 had been instructed to replace the roof tiles. Ms F complained on 20 August 2018, enclosing Builder 3's invoice.
20. The Council replied on 21 August 2018. It said Building Control did not act as a Clerk of Works and meeting building regulations standards was the building owner's responsibility. The Council said the inspection of the roof covering was not part of the statutory items which building control are required to check under the Building Regulations 2010. If the roof was not found to be leaking on the day of final inspection, or to be in a dangerous or defective condition, there would have been no reason to prevent the issue of the completion certificate. It apologised that a fees refund had been wrongly offered.

Ms F's complaint

21. Ms F remained dissatisfied and emailed the Council on 7 September 2018 but did not receive a response. In February 2019 Mr D complained to the Council that he had not had a Stage 2 response to the complaint.
22. The Council replied on 11 March 2019. It apologised for not responding sooner and said it had introduced a new complaints logging system to improve its service.
23. The Council did not uphold Mr D's complaint. It said it was unfortunate Builder 1 had not passed on the need for different roof tiles to Builder 2 or Mr D. At the time of the final inspection it was not obvious that the incorrect roof tiles had been used and, as the roof was not found to be leaking, dangerous or in a defective condition, a completion certificate had been issued. The Council said the only way to seek compensation was to make a claim against the Council. Ms F complained to the Ombudsman in July 2019.

My findings

24. The Council, as a building control inspection authority, gave advice and inspected the building to satisfy itself that building regulations were met. There is a dispute about whether the Council informed Mr D about the roof tiles, but in November 2017 the inspector advised Builder 1 to order different roof tiles. It was Mr D's and the builder's responsibility to ensure this happened and that the roof met building regulations standards. The Council was not responsible for the actions or quality of the builder's work or for ensuring Builder 1 told Mr D about the roof tiles.
25. In January 2018 the Council issued a completion certificate. Ms F says it was wrong to do so as the roof tiles were incorrect. The Council was not required to inspect the roof tiles in order to issue the certificate. The Council followed the

process we would expect and so I do not find fault with the inspections or issuing of the certificate.

26. The courts' ruling means the Council would not be liable for the cost of any remedial works Mr D had to do to his extension. This would be the case even if the Council was at fault in the way Ms F alleges. We could not, therefore, ask the Council to offer Mr D a payment to cover the cost of the building works.
27. Responsibility for compliance with building regulations lies on the builder and landowner. Disputes about the quality of work are not for the Ombudsman to decide. Any dispute about quality is a contractual matter for Mr D, Builder 1 and Builder 2. Resolutions to civil disputes are ultimately settled in the civil courts, not by councils.
28. In response to my enquiries, the Council acknowledged that the officer had wrongly offered a refund of the fees in August 2018 as he was not authorised to do so. It had apologised to Mr D for this.
29. This was fault and it caused Mr D raised expectations. However, I do not consider it caused significant injustice. Mr D needed to make repairs to the roof regardless of the refund and I can see no reason why he could not have waited until the refund had been confirmed before employing Builder 3. In any event, the Council wrote to Mr D on 14 August 2018 to say the refund would not be forthcoming, so he had not had to wait long. The Council is not responsible for Builder 3's pricing.
30. The Council delayed responding to Mr D's stage 2 complaint, which is fault. It has already apologised for this, which remedies the injustice caused.

Final decision

31. There was fault by the Council. The actions the Council has already taken remedy the injustice caused.

Investigator's decision on behalf of the Ombudsman

Part A

Report to: Cabinet
Date of meeting: 2 March 2020
Report of: Energy & Renewal Surveyor
Title: Sustainability Strategy – Part 1 2020-2023

1.0 **Summary**

- 1.1 The first phase of this Sustainability Strategy sets out a roadmap from 2020 to 2023 towards an ambition to become net climate neutral for emissions generated within the Borough that fall within the influence of the local authority.
- 1.2 Following consideration by Heads of Service and Portfolio Holders, the strategy was presented to the Sustainability Forum on 24 February 2020.

2.0 **Risks**

Nature of Risk	Consequence	Suggested Control Measures	Response (Treat, tolerate, terminate, transfer)	Risk Rating (the combination of severity and likelihood)
Lack of early progress and progression towards the target	Risk to achieving the final target (Leaving the target harder to achieve in future years).	<p>Through the Project Board have adequate monitoring and determination of each project and its consequences towards the target.</p> <p>Ensure that there are adequate sign off, resource and regular reporting.</p> <p>Understanding what is required to achieve the target</p>	Treat	3x2 = 6

		<p>through baseline and analysing the projects progressed.</p> <p>Ensure strategy developed and integrated in corporate policy and decision making.</p> <p>Ensure the strategy is regularly reviewed and adapted via a/the formal process proposed</p>		
Criticism of the ambition in relation to the project actions and their ability in meeting our climate emergency declaration	Bad publicity and lack of community support and engagement	<p>Develop and update regular communications (create a comms. plan)</p> <p>Regular review and monitoring</p> <p>Regular update and report of actions</p>	Treat	3x2 = 6
<p>Conflicting Opinion of Stakeholders</p> <p>And</p> <p>that cannot be aligned with other council priorities – at odds with other priorities (i.e. affordable houses to build vs long term climate impact)</p>	Inability to reach consensus on strategic aims	<p>New Structure with Head of Commercial taking responsibility to align with other council priorities</p> <p>Develop key stakeholder relationships</p>	Treat	3x3 = 9
Lack of adequate resource to	Will affect effective delivery	Project board Embedded	Treat	2x4 = 8

<p>deliver – A dependency on key individuals.</p> <p>Many of the projects require development with outcomes and resource unknown at present</p>		<p>Regular reporting through proposed structure</p>		
<p>Lack of finance to deliver the projects</p>	<p>Will affect effective delivery</p>	<p>Identification of business case to make decisions on opportunities and self-recycling for some schemes</p> <p>Identify future needs and set provision for an annual budget</p> <p>Adequate resource to lever in external funding</p>	<p>Treat</p>	<p>3x3 = 9</p>
<p>National policy changes funding and ambition (national ambition is currently low in comparison to WBC targets (2050 vs 2030 for WBC carbon neutrality)</p>	<p>Will affect effective delivery</p>	<p>Seek to influence where possible.</p> <p>Adapt strategy to reflect national picture and policy</p> <p>(this maybe positive or negative in relation climate change policies</p>	<p>Treat/ tolerate</p>	<p>2x2 = 4</p>
<p>Inability within the strategy proposals in establishing early enough baselines</p>	<p>Inability to be able to track progress for reporting and to determine realistic future targets and projects within</p>	<p>Investigate options to prioritise key influences (i.e. sites or projects that have the biggest impact to the target)</p>	<p>treat</p>	<p>3x3 = 9</p>

	the early part of the target term			
--	-----------------------------------	--	--	--

3.0 Recommendation

3.1 Cabinet is asked to note and approve the strategy, action plan, initial 6 projects to focus on and the project structure to deliver the strategy.

3.2 That the Group Head of Commercial is to have delegated authority to progress the action plan and subsequent future parts of the strategy in conjunction with the portfolio holder.

Contact Officer:

For further information on this report please contact:

Neil Walker, Energy & Renewal Surveyor

Telephone extension: Extension 8149

Email: neil.walker@watford.gov.uk

Report approved by: Alan Gough, Group Head of Community & Environmental Services

4.0 Detailed proposal

4.1 On 9th July 2019 Watford's elected councillors voted in favour of declaring a climate emergency and have pledged to do everything in their power to make the borough carbon neutral by 2030.

4.2 The motion approved the following actions:

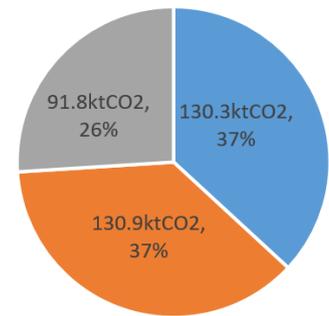
- 1) Join other Councils in recognising and declaring a climate emergency
- 2) Pledge to do everything within the Council's power to make the whole of Watford carbon neutral by 2030
- 3) Within this develop an ambitious sustainability strategy for reducing the Council's own emissions, with an objective that the Council becomes carbon neutral by 2030
- 4) Use all planning regulations and the Local Plan to cut carbon emissions and reduce the impact on the environment
- 5) Call on national government for more powers and resources to make this pledge possible, and ask the Elected Mayor to write to the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs to this effect
- 6) Continue to work with partners across the borough, county and region to deliver this new goal through all relevant strategies and plans
- 7) Take account of climate impacts within existing decision making processes
- 8) Report back to Council, via the newly established Sustainability Forum, on an action plan to address the climate emergency, and then every six months after this an update on progress being made. The proposed action plan to be on the agenda of the Sustainability Forum to be held 3rd October 2019

9) Dedicate enough staff and budget to achieve these aims, including the most appropriate training for members and officers to promote carbon neutral polices and to achieve these aims”

4.3 This strategy sets out the first part of our journey towards our target of achieving net zero CO2 emissions for the whole borough by 2030.

4.4 Our borough wide emissions are measured each year by the Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy. There are three categories measured that are considered within the scope of the local authority influence. These are emissions from estimates of end-user carbon dioxide (CO2) emissions produced in three areas: Industrial & Commercial, Domestic and Transport.

4.5 [Emissions](#) for the most up to date figures in 2017 totalled 353kt CO₂, split between those emitted by domestic, responsible for 37%; by commercial, 37% and by transport, 26%.



4.6 *Chart depicting emissions breakdown in the borough that are deemed within the influence of Watford Borough Council (ktCO₂)*

■ Domestic ■ Commercial ■ Transport

4.7 In response to the climate emergency declaration this strategy sets out the initial projects and proposals to 2023 that work towards net borough wide carbon neutrality by 2030.

4.8 During 2020 to 2023 further work will be completed to publish the next part of the strategy that will work towards this goal.

➤ **Strategy Objectives**

4.9 Set the base line for our current borough wide emissions

4.10 Collate existing and currently proposed projects that will work towards our target

4.11 Set new and ambitious projects that will work towards our target within the six key themes of the strategy:

- Leading By Example
- Reducing Energy Use and Emissions
- Improving Transport & Air Quality
- Reducing Waste
- Nature Restoration
- People Power

4.12 Continue to evolve and adapt our current phase of the strategy and develop further phases that work towards achieving our target through to 2030.

➤ **Strategy Definition**

4.13 **In Scope**

- Setting our baseline for net emissions using annual published data for emissions that fall within the influence of the Local Authority published by the [Department for Business Energy & Industrial strategy](#) (BEIS).
- Including emissions that are from our own LA operations.

4.14 **Out of Scope**

- Emissions that fall outside of the scope of Local Authorities have been excluded in our target baseline. These are emissions that Local Authorities doesn't have direct influence over. These are:
 - Motorways – all emissions from the “Transport (motorways)” sector have been removed.
- EU Emissions Trading System (EU ETS) sites – these emissions have been removed from the “Large industrial installations” sector, with the exception of energy suppliers (e.g. power stations), whose emissions are indirectly included via the end-user estimates for electricity use. Note that not all the emissions from the “Large industrial installations” sector are produced by EU ETS installations, hence the fact that there are emissions remaining in this sector in the subset.
- Diesel railways – all emissions from the “Diesel Railways” sector have been excluded;
- Land Use, Land Use Change, and Forestry – all emissions belonging to the “LULUCF Net emissions” sector have been excluded.

Initial Focus

4.15

Our initial approach will be to focus on 6 projects covering every theme of the strategy, whilst mobilising our ability to deliver and develop the remaining action plan.

Theme	Project	Reason
Leading By Example	Develop a sustainability eLearning module to be completed by all staff during induction and then on an annual basis as part of the yearly Performance Review process.	To ensure all staff are engaged and actively helping towards our target working towards sustainability being embedded across all of the organisation
People Power	Encourage and support community engagement	A key part of our strategy depends upon residents taking their own actions to reduce their carbon footprint and support the council to deliver our goals. Our actions will be influenced by our community. We plan to survey residents and partners asking for their opinions
Reducing Energy Use	Analyse and report on our annual corporate greenhouse gas emissions	To be able to measure our progress we will need to establish an

and Emissions	and progress towards our targets via the website and the Council's annual Performance Report. Look to automate the process through BMS systems and a managed analysis solution	accurate baseline. This will also help us identify priority areas that have the biggest effect on emission reduction
Improving Transport & Air Quality	Participate and develop the HCC Sustainable Transport town application as part of a wider ranging strategy to cover low carbon transportation in the borough;	Transport is responsible for around ¼ of our target emissions. We wish to bring together the many transport related projects being progressed and proposed into one comprehensive strategy that works towards our target
Reducing Waste	Work towards becoming a single-use Plastic Free Council. This will involve auditing our use of single use plastics and replacing them wherever possible with more sustainable alternatives.	We want to set a good example and be responsible by considering wider aspects of sustainability within our strategies and not just those that we are measuring against through delivering our net zero emission target.
Nature Restoration	Consider and incorporate initiatives for improving the wildlife value of all Council owned new buildings or when doing external works to existing buildings.	Similar to reducing waste increasing biodiversity in the borough is part of the sustainability agenda. It will also contribute to air quality as well as the social health and wellbeing within the borough

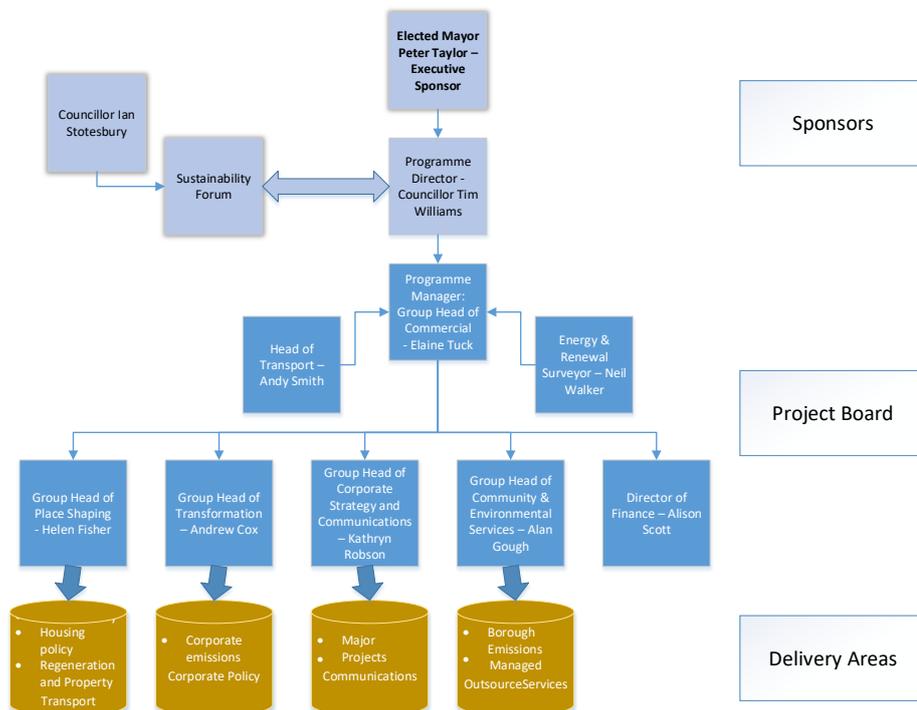
Funding

- 4.16 Various projects within the strategy are already funded within the councils existing and agreed spending plans.
- 4.17 Some projects will be defined through feasibility and investigation, whereby budgets will then be considered on a project by project basis through developed business cases.
- 4.18 Part of the remit of the project board will be to manage budget provision and make recommendation for projects, as well as to seek funding streams as appropriate.
- 4.19 Watford Borough Council has already procured external project capital in working towards project delivery. Examples include making use of central government funding and support:
- A feasibility study for district heating paid for by the government heat network delivery unit ([HNDU](#)), managed by the Department of Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy.
 - Applying for Grant schemes for electric vehicle charging infrastructure ([OLEV](#)).
 - Making continued use of Energy Company Obligation funding ([ECO](#)) to support residents with energy efficiency improvements.

- The council will also consider making use of finance options that may be available (for example the [public works loan board](#)) and other beneficial schemes such as the [Carbon Trust interest free loans](#). These options will be considered as part of business cases.
- When considering business cases we will look at whole life cycle costings, for example higher initial capital cost of electric vehicle fleet and its infrastructure recouped by running cost savings made in the longer term or income that can be generated from solar panels to provide a return on investment.
- We will seek to make use of partnership working to share resource and opportunities (for example with other LA's) and consider options available to local authorities such as procurement and delivery routes provided by [Local Partnerships](#).
- We will seek to develop ring fenced funding streams for the sustainability agenda such as funds from considering carbon offsetting (section 106), business sponsorship and grant applications.

Stakeholders

4.20 The strategy is set to be delivered by the new Group Head for Commercial in a structure as follows:



4.21 Sustainability is currently being led by Alan Gough, Group Head of Community & Environmental Services

4.22 An action plan project includes the objective to seek community involvement. It is proposed consultation will take place to help develop and support the next part of the strategy. Part of this will be delivered through a comprehensive communications strategy, to include engagement of our residents and businesses within the borough.

- 4.23 Within the development of the next part of the strategy an assessment will be made and mapped on interdependencies and influences of other councils strategies.
- 4.24 An indicative assessment has been made for each project to determine:
- The estimation of each projects financial scale (from none to high).
- and
- An estimation of each project’s financial capital commitment (from ‘none’, such as development of a web page; through to the ‘need for a business case’. As projects are developed this will help to keep track of progress and resource required.

5.0 Implications

5.1 Financial

- 5.1.1 The Shared Director of Finance comments that all projects will require individual business cases and those that are not currently contained in existing budgets will require growth bids or external funding as part of the budget process.

5.2 Legal Issues (Monitoring Officer)

- 5.2.1 The Group Head of Democracy and Governance comments that any funding for projects that that are not within the budget will need to be approved by council.

5.3 Equalities

- 5.3.1 A full Equality Impact Assessment will be undertaken during the development of the strategy for sign off.

5.4 Staffing

- 5.4.1 To be confirmed

Appendices

WBC Sustainability Strategy – Part 1
WBC Sustainability Action Plan



SUSTAINABILITY STRATEGY 2020 TO 2023

Road to net zero – part 1



Page 20



Foreword from Peter Taylor, Elected Mayor of Watford	3
Introduction	4
Leading By Example	8
Reducing Energy Use and Emissions	11
Improving Transport & Air Quality	18
Reducing Waste	26
Nature Restoration	29
People Power	38
We are all in this together	38
Appendix 1	40
Climate Change: Compelling us to take action	40
Carbon Offsetting	43

Figure 1: Cross Service Sustainability Board: Structure Chart	9
Figure 2: Local Authority emissions (kt CO₂)	11
Figure 3: Emissions within the influence of Watford Borough Council (ktCO₂)	12
Figure 4: Watford Borough Council road to net zero CO₂	13
Figure 5: Air Quality Management sites, Watford	19
Figure 6: <i>Watford E-Car club usage figures</i>	20
Figure 7: Percentage of rivers achieving good or better ecological status 2009 to 2016	34
Figure 8: Global average temperature anomaly. Source of chart: Met Office	40

Foreword from Peter Taylor, Elected Mayor of Watford

Taking local action for global change

Climate change remains a concern for millions of people, and around the world communities everywhere are living with its affects. From extreme heatwaves, cold snaps and flooding, to species loss and collapse of our environments. We are just at the beginning of changes that will fundamentally affect every aspect of our environment. That's why we all have a responsibility to make changes, to act to prepare us and future generations for a sustainable way of living. Helping to shape a borough to be proud of, we are committed to doing everything we can to reduce our emissions and adapt to our changing climate. We can no longer continue 'business as usual' so at the beginning of the summer the council declared a climate emergency. This was a public testimony of our commitment to reduce the carbon footprint of the council and the whole borough.

Our far reaching and ambitious strategy sets out how the council and the town will work towards our target of becoming carbon neutral by 2030. This strategy brings together some of our existing projects and immediate plans that are already taking shape delivering this aim. Further projects are being developed so that through our example we can leave a prosperous and sustainable legacy for the future.

The UK Government was the first in the world to declare a climate emergency that commits to reducing emissions to net zero by 2050. As a country we will all need to work together with urgency. As a borough we can help influence this change and demand action to decarbonise our energy use, improve insulation in homes and businesses as well as improving our emissions from transport. The Council will play its part in this transition, seizing the opportunities such as creating green jobs and projects that result in cleaner air and healthier environments.

The Council already has a long and strong history of helping improve the environment. From insulating homes to help residents cut emissions and reduce fuel bills, to improving our council run buildings. By increasing our efficiencies we have reduced our costs, whilst still providing quality services for our residents. We have been building for the future with examples of our award winning leisure centres that incorporate solar arrays, ground source heat pumps, hot water recovery and UV water treatment to reduce the need for chemicals.

In the borough Watford's green spaces have been granted more Green Flag awards than any other district in Hertfordshire for the fourth year running. We are currently working to become a Sustainable Travel Town and our aspirations are in full swing with our new cycle hubs and bike share scheme, improved cycling routes and on demand buses which come into action from March 2020.

So with this strategy I am proud that we have a number of initiatives that support our climate change agenda that improve our natural world. With your help I am looking forward to working with our community to create a green, prosperous, healthy and sustainable town for us and for future generations to come.

We hope that local people will work with us to find ways to reduce our impact on the environment, whether that is how we travel; how we heat our homes; what food we choose to eat; or how we deal with our waste. **Peter Taylor, Elected Mayor of Watford**

Introduction

*“Man-made climate change is the biggest threat that humanity faces. In 2018 the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) report states that we have just 12 years to act on climate change if global temperatures rises are to be kept within the recommended 1.5 degrees Celsius. All governments whether national, regional or local have a duty to limit the negative impacts on climate change and need to commit to aggressive reduction targets and carbon neutrality as quickly as possible. Watford Borough Council has a pivotal role to play in tackling climate change and enabling sustainable living. We recognise the importance of tackling climate change both in the terms of reducing greenhouse gas emissions to minimise future global climate change and planning for the unavoidable local impacts of climate change”. **Councillor Ian Stotesbury, Watford Borough Council.***

On 9th July 2019 Watford’s elected councillors voted in favour of declaring a climate emergency and have pledged to do everything in their power to make the borough carbon neutral by 2030.

The motion approved the following actions:

- 1) Join other Councils in recognising and declaring a climate emergency
- 2) Pledge to do everything within the Council’s power to make the whole of Watford carbon neutral by 2030
- 3) Within this develop an ambitious sustainability strategy for reducing the Council’s own emissions, with an objective that the Council becomes carbon neutral by 2030
- 4) Use all planning regulations and the Local Plan to cut carbon emissions and reduce the impact on the environment

- 5) Call on national government for more powers and resources to make this pledge possible, and ask the Elected Mayor to write to the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs to this effect
- 6) Continue to work with partners across the borough, county and region to deliver this new goal through all relevant strategies and plans
- 7) Take account of climate impacts within existing decision making processes
- 8) Report back to Council, via the newly established Sustainability Forum, on an action plan to address the climate emergency, and then every six months after this provide an update on progress being made. The proposed action plan to be on the agenda of the Sustainability Forum to be held 3rd October 2019
- 9) Dedicate enough staff and budget to achieve these aims, including the most appropriate training for members and officers to promote carbon neutral polices and to achieve these aims”

Sustainability means different things to different people. In this strategy we aim to address not just how our operations and the boroughs residents impact emissions; but also look at ways that improve our living environment. We want to have a forward thinking strategy that protects the health of ourselves and the ecosystems we depend upon. As a community leader we have a responsibility to protect the environment, with actions that are appropriate and cost effective. We want to deliver economic and public health benefits, create jobs and reduce our spending on energy costs and reduce our waste so that we can create a resilient, prosperous and healthy borough.

A strategy with 6 key strands



Leading By Example



Reducing Energy Use and Emissions



Improving Transport & Air Quality



Reducing Waste



Nature Restoration



People Power

This strategy sets out the first part of our journey towards our target of achieving net zero CO₂ emissions for the whole borough by 2030. To track our progress we are using borough wide emissions as measured each year by the [Department for Business Energy & Industrial strategy](#) (BEIS). There are three categories measured that are considered within the scope of the local authority influence. These are emissions from estimates of end-user carbon dioxide (CO₂) emissions produced in three areas: Industrial & Commercial, Domestic and Transport.

Within this first period we will be working on the next phase of the strategy and also continue to improve, evolve and develop new projects that work towards our 2030 target.



LEADING BY EXAMPLE





Leading By Example

“We’ve been committed to reducing our carbon footprint for several years now, with successful recycling and home insulation schemes in place, good access to public transport and several award winning urban green spaces that promote biodiversity and reduced carbon emissions, but we need to do more – this declaration will accelerate and broaden our range of activities so we can achieve carbon neutrality by 2030 – key for our community and our planet.” Elected Mayor of Watford Peter Taylor.

The council has a long history of committing to climate change initiatives and delivering projects supporting carbon reduction. With the recent climate emergency declaration the council will also refresh its approach to sustainability, building on past success to ensure that this strategy is ambitious in reducing the Council’s and the boroughs emissions.

In June 2019 the first meeting of the Sustainability Forum took place consisting of 7 members (elected at Annual Council with representation from all parties, as well as officers. The remit of the forum is to:

- Bring together councillors and officers to discuss matters relating to sustainability to support the corporate plan.
- To provide an opportunity for councillors and officers to reflect on issues and emerging opportunities and think strategically to provide check and challenge to identified issues
- Identify if there needs to be any changes in Council policy and procedures or the need for action plans and, if so, take these forward for discussion and adoption by the Cabinet/Council as appropriate

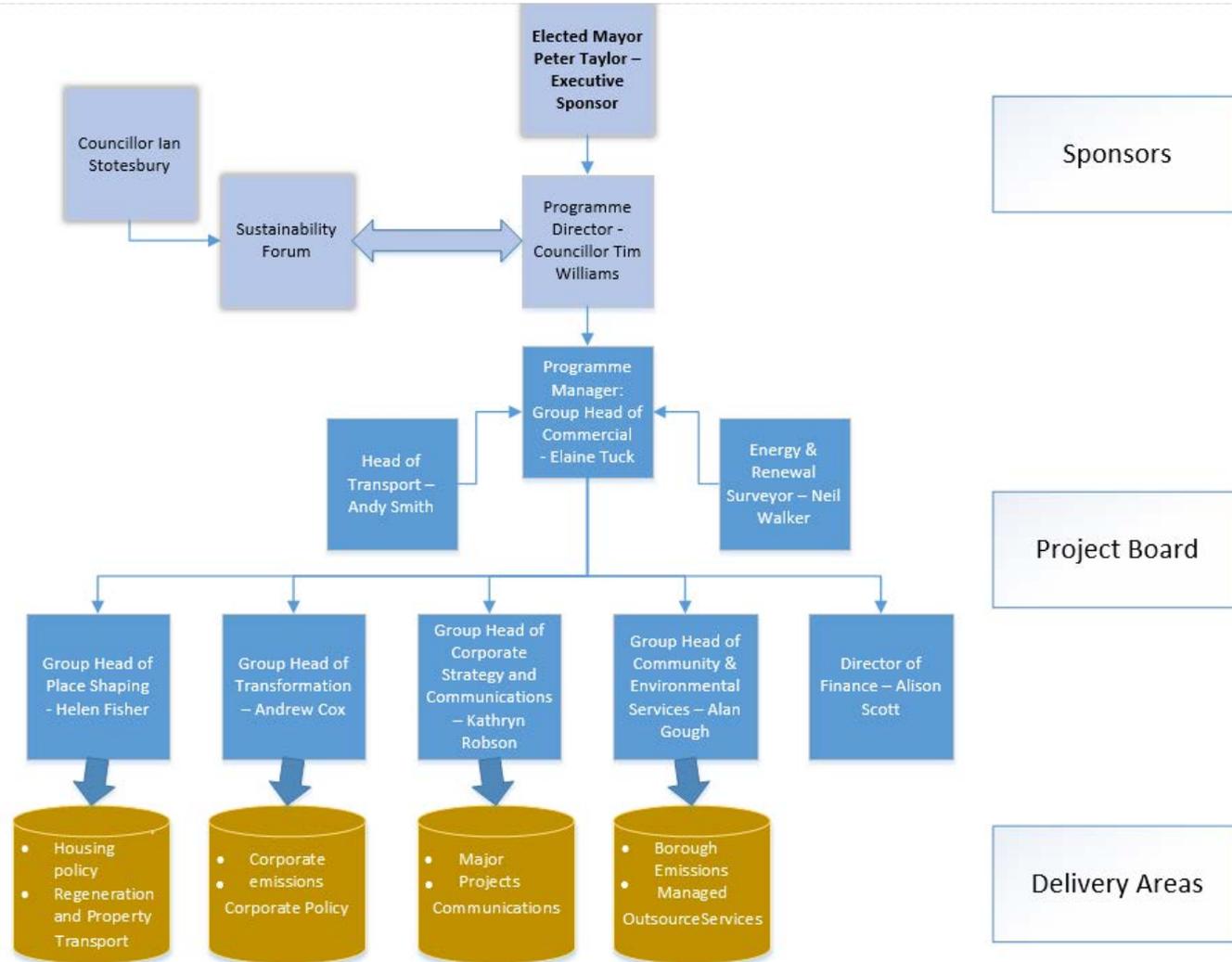


Watford FC promote the council signing up to [Climate Local](#) on 2nd December 2013

On 21st October 2019 the portfolio holders and heads of service agreed to commit to producing this Strategy to meet our 2030 zero carbon target. To deliver this plan a cross-service Sustainability Board with resources and clear corporate support for action will be set up. The Councillor led group will meet regularly, include senior representatives as well as technical officers and will report to the Sustainability Forum against progress and delivery.

Figure 1: Cross Service Sustainability Board: Structure Chart

- Produce strategies to deliver against our 2030 target
- Have oversight of projects that deliver this goal
- Report and set baselines on our own and the boroughs emissions
- Responsibility for delivery will be appointed to the new Group Head of Commercial with support from key heads of service across the council





REDUCING ENERGY USE AND EMISSIONS





Reducing Energy Use and Emissions

Our lives are fuelled by ever-increasing amounts of energy, and it is fossil fuel energy that is one of the main causes of climate change. By burning coal, oil and gas for energy, we are disrupting the radiative balance of the atmosphere, trapping heat and warming the earth's surface. As a result, average global temperatures have increased at a dramatic rate, affecting weather patterns and disrupting the delicate balance of the world's ecosystems, species and populations. The severity and scale of these impacts will become more severe as temperatures rise.

In 2017 the latest figures show that the borough generated 353 kt CO₂ that fall within the influence of the Local Authority. Emissions are categorised into three distinct sectors: those emitted by domestic, by commercial and by transport.

When comparing emissions of carbon dioxide per capita by Local Authority (tonnes CO₂ per capita), Watford is in the lowest category. Due to the urban nature of the borough, its good public transport links, a lack of major industry and high population density the boroughs emissions are comparatively low.

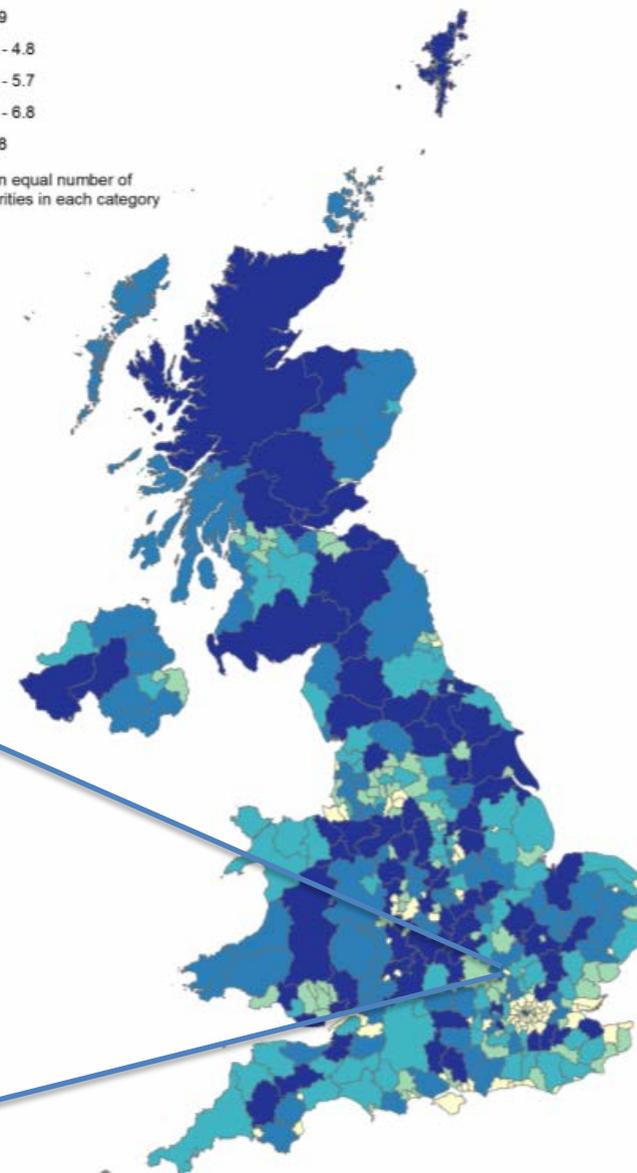
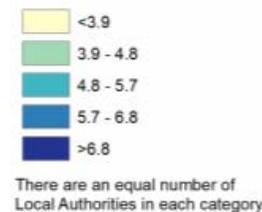
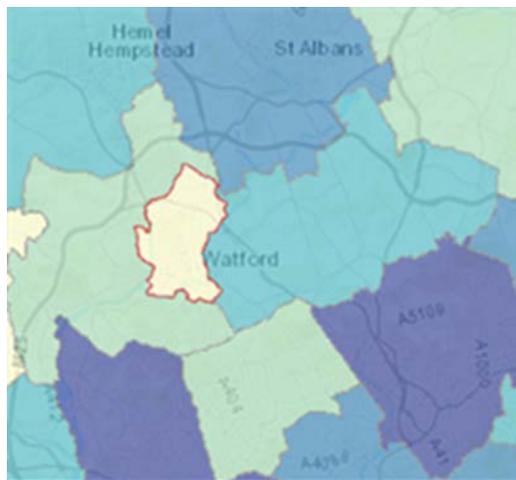


Figure 2: Local Authority emissions (kt CO₂)



Data supplied from: [UK National Atmospheric Emissions Inventory](#) 2017

Over the next 10 years the council is committed to achieving Net Carbon Zero which will mean substantially reducing our energy consumption through improving the energy performance of new and existing buildings, transforming the way we use energy across communities and those generated by transport.

The council will measure our emissions using data supplied by the [Department for Business Energy & Industrial Strategy](#) (BEIS) using their annual published data for emissions that fall within the influence of the Local Authority. Emissions are categorised into three distinct sectors: those emitted by domestic, responsible for 37%; by commercial, 37% and by transport, 26%.

As the national grid continues to decarbonise UK emissions have continued to fall. In May 2019, the UK made headlines as we did not use coal to generate electricity for two weeks - the longest period since the 1880s. In June zero-carbon sources overtook fossil fuels in their power generation for the first time. Currently in Watford [1,783 buildings](#) (domestic and business) within the borough have roof mounted solar photovoltaic (PV) panels which help avoid the demand and usage from the national grid.

The council has set a target for the borough to become net zero by 2030 for those emissions within the influence of the local authority. The emissions target trajectory graph for each of the sectors is displayed in figure 4.

Although this strategy is concentrated on the borough of Watford it is noted that external influences such as national strategy and wider regional strategies (such as [Local Energy East: Tri-LEP Area Strategy](#)) will determine the success of reaching our target. The council will therefore continue to inform, engage, influence and work with external partners for the benefit of our community.

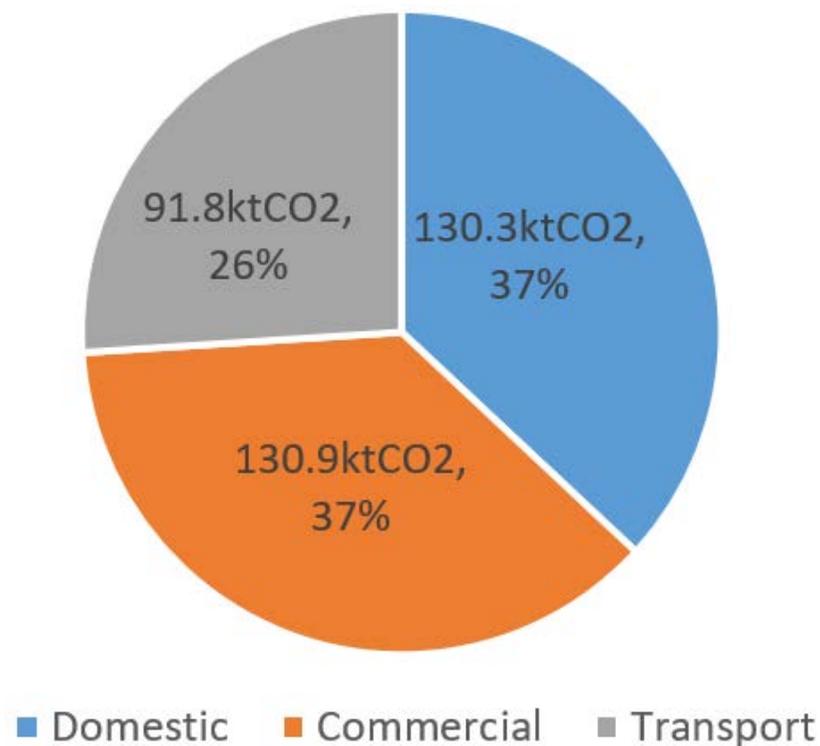
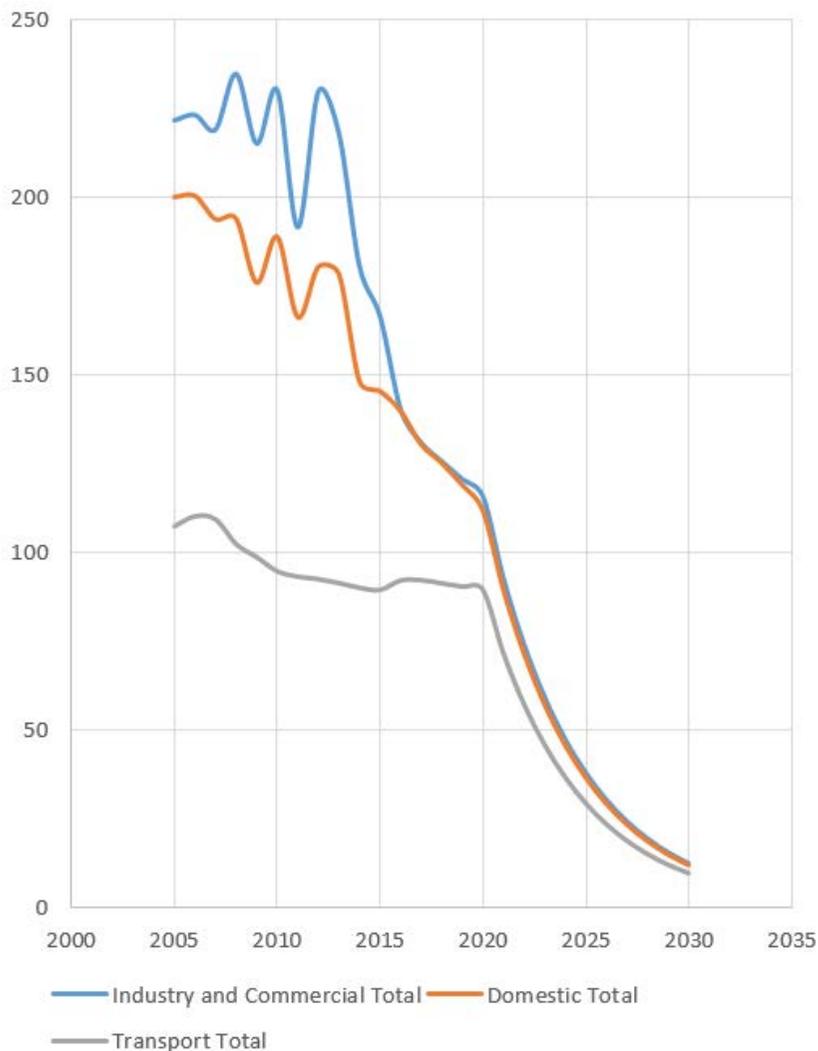


Figure 3: Emissions within the influence of Watford Borough Council (ktCO₂)



Domestic (130.3 kt CO₂):

The borough has an estimated 40,129 properties (in 2018). [The new Watford Local Plan](#) estimates that an additional 7,500 new homes are expected to be built to 2036. Therefore the majority of the emissions will still be from the existing housing. On the energy performance rating scale (EPC) 25% of Watford's housing is rated 'A' to 'C', 61% are rated 'D' and 'E' with the remaining 4% estimated to be in the worst performing categories of 'E' and 'F'. The energy efficiency rating for the average property in Watford compares less favourably to the English average, whereby 30% of homes are already 'A' to 'C' compared to just 25% in Watford. This mainly reflects the older age of the town (as the majority of older housing performs worse than a modern home). Newer housing has become more efficient over the years as standards improve; meaning 8/10 new build homes are rated 'A' or 'B' (and have to be at least a 'C'). The government's [Clean Growth Strategy](#) sets a target to upgrade as many homes as possible to Band 'C' by 2035.

Generally the less energy efficient a home is the more emissions it is likely to produce (however this also depends on, for example, the amount of time the heating is switched on). If all new homes get built 16% of the housing stock will be new leaving 84% existing stock. New housing standards should lead to improvements in energy efficiency in new homes. The government's proposals are set out in the [Future Homes Standard](#). In addition our new [local plan](#) is proposing to set standards that above that of the current building regulations.

From the councils stock condition analysis it is estimated that retrofitting the existing housing stock with approximately 60,000 different energy improvement measures

would decrease the emissions from the domestic sector by 45%.

Figure 4: Watford Borough Council road to net zero CO₂

These improvement measures (that currently attract subsidies from energy companies under the [Energy Company Obligation](#) – ECO) could be fitted to homes in the borough. The estimated requirement needed to upgrade all of the housing stock is based on fitting the following number of measures; Cavity Wall insulation (5,800), First time heating (2,000), Heating Controls (4,000), Loft Insulation <100mm (2,000), Air Source Heat Pump (or other renewables, 2,000), Replacement Boiler (12,000), Room in Roof insulation (1,500), Solar PV (8,000), Solid Wall Insulation (5,000), Storage Heater replacement (500), Underfloor Insulation (15,000), Party Wall Insulation (2,500).

Retrofitting houses to improve insulation standards also has other benefits with respect to the health of the boroughs residents. In [2017, 3,954 households in Watford](#) (10.2%) experienced fuel poverty. This means that these residents may not have been able to keep their homes warm enough at a reasonable cost. This happens when homes are inefficient at retaining heat, income is low, and fuel costs are high. As a result, people can find themselves having to make choices between warmth and food, which has been found to affect [physical and mental health](#). By reducing fuel poverty there should be a reduction in excess winter deaths. This is a measure of the number of deaths that occur through the cold by measuring the difference between deaths that occur in the winter and those that occur in the summer months. During the period between August 2017 and July 2018 Watford's [excess winter mortality index](#) was 16.9, which was lower than the national average for England at 29.6. However, during the same period the previous year (August 2016 and July 2017) Watford had a significantly higher excess winter death index rate at 33.2, than the England and Wales average which was at 21.3. Whilst the figures show marked improvement, it should be noted that the index is prone to fluctuations due to many factors such as rising energy costs, new strains of illnesses such as influenza and changing levels of homelessness. By further improving energy efficiency, we can ensure that everyone, even the most vulnerable, can afford to stay warm enough in their home whilst conserving energy usage.

Industry & Commercial (130.9 kt CO₂):

There are approximately 5,000 businesses based in Watford ranging from global brands to SMEs occupying an estimated 6,000 buildings, offices and premises.

Their commercial and operational activities account for 37% of Watford's total emissions.

Business retrofit improvement measures through existing and new incentives – "[The Clean Growth Strategy](#)" recognised that improved business energy efficiency could deliver £6 billion in cost savings by 2030 and generate one of the single largest carbon-saving measures in the entire Strategy". However "the barriers to uptake are [well documented](#): a lack of information; a lack of access to capital; high upfront costs and long payback periods; misaligned incentives between tenants and landlords; disruption to normal business activities; and competing investment demands within companies resulting in

other business growth investments taking precedence”. There have been various initiatives supported by the council within the sector; such as One Watford Green business projects back in 2009, to more recently the promotion of [Low Carbon Workspaces](#) European Regional Development Fund (which offered small and medium-sized businesses up to £5,000 to cover up to a third of the cost of making energy improvements). However these schemes and projects have been limited in scale in context of the size of the industrial and commercial sector.

As a council we have the opportunity to influence low carbon business through improvement programmes as well as instigating low carbon infrastructure for development schemes. Examples of low carbon infrastructure are as follows:

- [District Heating/Heat networks](#)

“Today heat networks reduce carbon emissions in buildings by approximately 0.7-1 million tonnes of CO₂ each year. However, the potential is much higher.....analysis suggests that heat networks’ (both in on-gas and off-gas grid areas) contribution to heat decarbonisation by 2030 will be about 2.2 million tonnes of carbon emissions (mtCO₂) reduction in residential buildings and 3.5 MtCO₂ in non-residential buildings, totalling 5.7MtCO₂.”

The council carried out a Master Planning study for the town in March 2019 in partnership with the BEIS and the [Heat Network Delivery Unit](#) (HNDU) to identify appropriate sites for district heating. Specific opportunities to incorporate a heat networks have been identified in the town centre development as well as some other scaled housing developments. Further development of these schemes is available with subsidised funding through HNDU, with delivery through [Local Partnerships](#).

- [Low carbon new developments](#) – Can be achieved high building standards such as [Passivhaus](#) which need to form part of new scheme design.
- [Retro fitting commercial solar](#) – To WBC own assets initially which present substantial opportunity. The council own freehold on a number of assets suitable for solar such as Tesco, Retail Parks, multi storey car parks; many suitable for solar canopy and/or rooftop solar. Solar potential could deliver 35% of borough commercial emissions if fitted to around 29,000 suitable borough rooftops with larger potential using land mass such as car parks.

Transport (91.8 kt CO₂):

Emissions from transport are set out in theme 3 ‘Transport & air Quality’ within this strategy.

Key Project example:

Implement incentive schemes such as the Community Carbon Assistance/Loan as a delivery mechanism for an ongoing programme for improving the energy efficiency of homes in the borough.

Some examples of progress so far:

- **External Wall Insulation Programmes:** By insulating 730 properties, the council has saved 986 tonnes of CO₂ emission per annum whilst saving residents £220,000 in heating bills and the N.H.S £2,880,000 in societal costs.
- **Herts Warmer Homes:** A scheme delivering Energy Company obligation money to fund a variety of energy efficiency installations such as loft and cavity insulation and improved boiler installations. 436 referrals for Watford alone have been made via this scheme since January 2015 to December 2019, the most for the Hertfordshire region by far.
- **Herts and Essex Energy Partnership (2009 – 2013):** Over 1,000 installations took place in Watford, fitting measures such as loft, cavity, external wall insulation, efficient boilers and solar PV systems. These resulted in life time savings of over 19,000 tonnes of CO₂ emissions.





IMPROVING
TRANSPORT
& AIR QUALITY

ecar
A Europcar Company

PL68 FVC



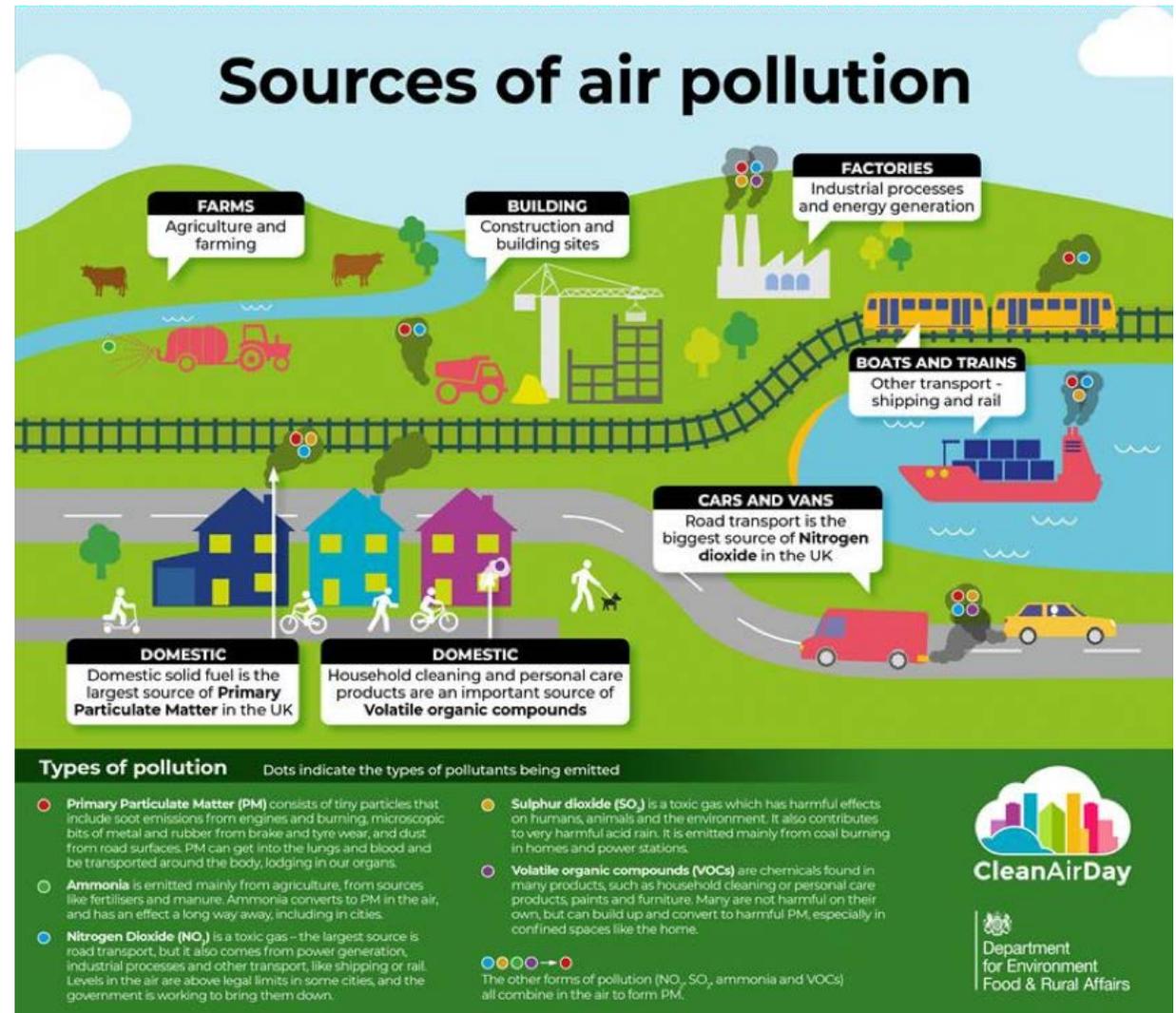
Improving Transport & Air Quality

Why is this important?

Air pollution is associated with a number of adverse health impacts. It is recognised as a contributing factor in the onset of [heart disease and cancer](#). Additionally, air pollution particularly affects the most [vulnerable in society](#): children and older people, and those with heart and lung conditions. There is also often a strong correlation with equalities issues, because [areas with poor air quality are also often the less affluent areas](#).

The annual health cost to society of the impacts of particulate matter alone in the UK is estimated to be around [£16 billion](#). Across the UK, it is thought that air pollution is responsible for the premature deaths of 50,000 people per year. This is twice the number of people dying from alcoholism and 26 times as many dying from road traffic incidents. Traffic noise can also [adversely affect health and concentration](#).

Public Health England estimates that in Hertfordshire [514 people](#) prematurely die each year as a result of ultra-fine particulate matter (PM2.5) alone. The main pollutants of interest in the Borough continue to be NO₂ and PM10 particulates. These are mainly associated with road traffic.



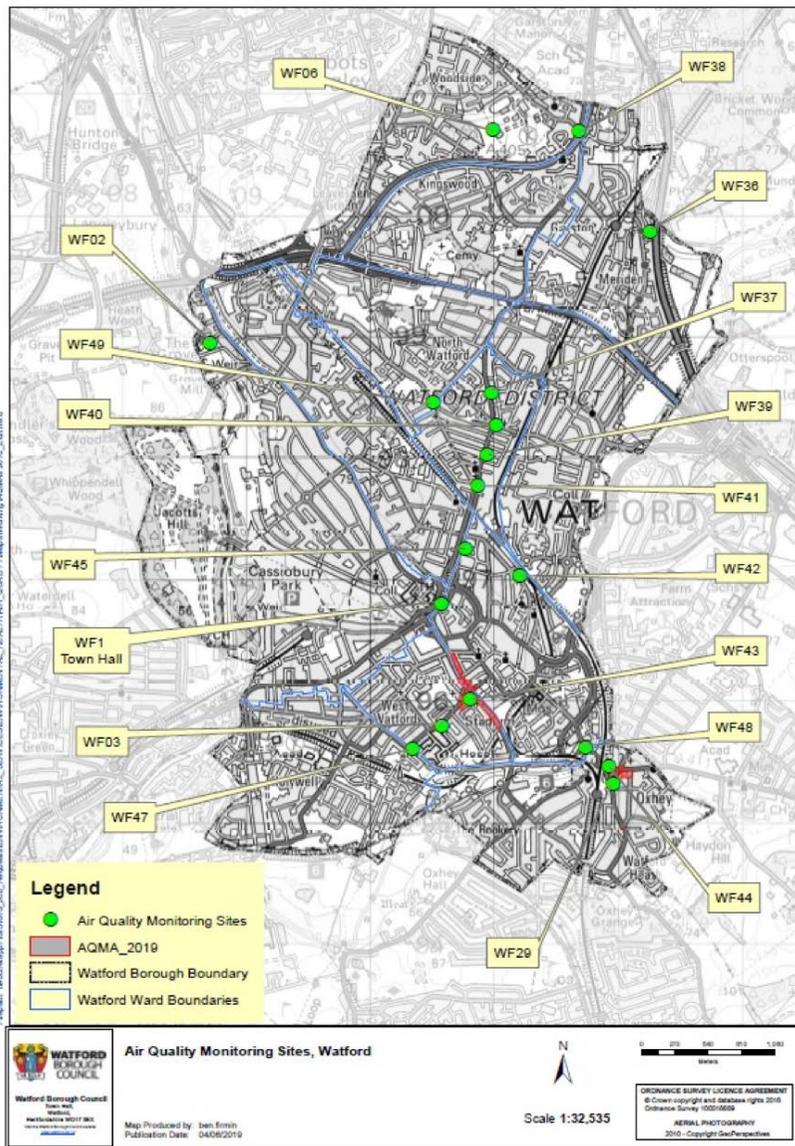


Figure 5: Air Quality Management sites, Watford

Watford Borough Council has monitored Air Quality through a series of Air Quality Management Areas (AQMAs). AQMA's are declared when there is an exceedance or likely exceedance of an air quality objective. After declaration, the authority must prepare an Air Quality Action Plan (AQAP) within 12-18 months setting out measures it intends to put in place in pursuit of compliance with the objectives.

In 2018, the Council carried out a review of the AQMAs in the Borough. In two AQMAs, trends over recent years have shown that NO₂ concentrations were below the national objective for NO₂. The Council has now therefore revoked these AQMAs.

There are two remaining AQMAs within Watford:

- AQMA 2: Vicarage Road.
- AQMA 3A: Pinner Road.

The improvement is considered to be the result of a gradual shift over time to vehicles that are less polluting, and this trend will hopefully continue with newer vehicles and a shift to less polluting vehicles such as Electric Vehicles. There were no exceedences of the air quality objectives for PM₁₀. Monitoring of PM_{2.5} to date has shown concentrations to be below the national objective annual mean target of 25 µg/m³.

Air Quality Action Plan (AQAP)

The objective of the AQAP is to improve air quality at the Watford AQMAs, working towards meeting the national air quality objective for the protection of human health. The Council's AQAP identified the effect that traffic has in the Borough's air quality and set out a range of transport-focused measures to improve them. In total, 21 options were considered. Additional options were suggested to complement planned and ongoing activity. Of these options 16 were moved forward as measures for implementation or further feasibility study.

Highlights of Progress so far:



Promotion of car sharing scheme - E-Car Club Scheme: In February 2019, as part of its commitment to support green transport, the Council in partnership with E-Car Club, offered residents the opportunity to [hire electric cars](#). Usage of the Car Club has on average increased as the awareness of the Car Club has grown (see figure 6). The Council has operated a pool car scheme for members of staff for a number of years.

Watford High Street Improvements: The High Street improvements led by the Council in partnership with HCC and the Watford BID – were undertaken to provide better access for everyone to fully enjoy the town centre. The work included upgrading the bus shelters, providing a new dedicated taxi rank and offering new permanent disabled parking bays. Part of the work was also aimed at encouraging pedestrian use by making the spaces more attractive and clutter free.

Clarendon Road Improvements: In February 2017 Project Centre was commissioned to undertake a Traffic Study in along Clarendon Road between the A411 and the High Street, and High Street between Clarendon Road and King Street to identify potential short and longer-term measures for improvement in the area. The work included a review of traffic movements through the High Street.



Figure 6: Watford E-Car club usage figures

Motor Vehicle Traffic: Project Centre were subsequently commissioned to undertake a review of traffic movements along High Street following completion of the works (completed at the end of August 2018), which included a bus gate to enforce the prohibition of motor vehicles (except buses and deliveries). In addition, an assessment of cycle movement was also requested in order to determine if there has been any increase in cycling since completion of the scheme. The survey data indicates that there has been a clear reduction in motor vehicles along the High Street following implementation. This confirms that the provision of the bus gate has been effective in reducing abuse of the prohibition.

Electric Vehicle infrastructure:

As part of plans to increase clean vehicles in the borough the council is working on increasing the provision of electric chargers. This is starting with the roll out of new on street chargers in March 20. In addition further chargers are being located in our public car parks -in addition to those already in place.

Cycling: To help reduce road traffic, CO₂ emissions and air pollution, as well as improving the health and fitness of people in Watford, Beryl Bikes will deliver the first council bike share scheme in Hertfordshire. The scheme will comprise up to 200 pedal bikes and 100 e-bikes at 70 locations across the borough. In conjunction with the new bike share bays the Council is continuing to install cycling stands across the town. In addition to those the Council has put in as part of the Public Real scheme (the Council and Intu have provided around 60 parking opportunities for cyclists)



On-demand bus service for Watford (launches March 2020):

Seven small fifteen-seater buses (accessible and DDA compliant) from ArrivaClick will provide a flexible bus service that, unlike others does not follow a fixed route at fixed times – but responds to demand from the passengers and the routes they want to take. There are no bus stops – people are picked up and dropped off at ‘virtual bus stops’ at a point either close to their home or their destination. The buses will operate across the borough and to Warner Brother Studios and Croxley Park (just outside the borough boundary). Each bus will have comfortable seating, tables, free Wi-Fi, USB chargers and air conditioning ensuring a clean, comfortable and safe method of public transport.

The scheme will operate via a free, easy to use smartphone app and the operator will also provide an online (web-based) and telephone service for those without access to a smartphone.

Travel app (launches January 2020): Revolutionising the way we travel across the town a free to download and use ‘Travel Watford’ app will be available to bring together all of Watford’s transport options. It will let people choose the best options for a given journey based on cost, waiting time and environmental impact.

Hertfordshire County Council (HCC) Highways Service delivers a programme of transport improvement projects focusing on improving sustainable transport in the county – this is called the Integrated Transport Programme. The following schemes were in the delivery programme for 2018/19 in Watford:



- . Watford High Street ongoing works to improve the contraflow cycle route – including the installation of segregating wands to prevent vehicle parking and protect people cycling in that lane;
- . 20 mph zones completed covering the Nascot Wood Road area, north of Langley Road area, Greenbank Road area, Sandringham Road area and Bradshaw Road area. These schemes were started earlier in 2017/18.

HCC also provided funding contributions to Watford Borough Council’s High Street and Clarendon Road urban realm improvement projects, the main of which was delivered in 2018. The council also works with HCC through their support and administration of the Intalink Partnership of Hertfordshire bus and passenger transport operators and local authorities. HCC are currently considering the introduction of an enhanced partnership plan and scheme. The aim of this will be to have more control over the service providers and will also incentivise fleet modernisation. The plan will also be to introduce ANPR data, real time timetabling data, mobile apps etc. to enable a better customer experience, which should help increase the number of passengers using the service.

Herts Sustainable Town: The council is applying to HCC to become a [Sustainable Travel Town](#). This project aims to bring together all of the transport and transport related sustainability strategy projects into a single vision for the transport in the town. The council’s vision for this project is:

‘To improve the availability, awareness and choice of sustainable transport options to make Watford a greener and cleaner town for everyone’. The project has the following objectives:

- To facilitate the move to Active Travel
- To improve accessibility and mobility within the town
- To improve health and wellbeing
- To support sustained behaviour change with regards to travel choice
- To evolve suitable metrics to measure outcomes

Indoor Air Quality

Increasingly, the awareness of indoor air pollution is being recognised. Recent studies have shown that air pollution can be [3.5 times higher indoors than outdoors](#). Public Health England state there are a number of sources of indoor air pollutants that can harm health including:

- CO, NO2 and particulates from domestic appliances (boilers, heaters, fires, stoves and ovens), which burn carbon containing fuels (coal, coke, gas, kerosene and wood)
- VOCs from cleaning and personal care products, building materials and household consumer products (paints, carpets, laminate furniture, cleaning products, air fresheners, polishing)
- environmental tobacco smoke (ETS) and second hand smoke (SHS)

In light of these studies, Watford Borough Council is committed to creating awareness of Indoor Air Quality and solutions through engaging with businesses, homes, schools and community groups.

Further information can be found at:

https://www.watford.gov.uk/info/20010/your_environment/196/local_air_quality

<https://www.globalactionplan.org.uk/clean-air-hub/clean-air-information/the-basic-information>

[Watford Borough Council's Air Quality Strategy](#)

Example Key Projects:

- Participate and develop the HCC Sustainable Travel Town application as part of a wider ranging strategy to cover low carbon transportation in the borough;
- Introduce Beryl Bikes - the first council bike share scheme in Hertfordshire. The scheme will comprise up to 200 pedal bikes and 100 e-bikes at 70 across the borough.

REDUCING WASTE



recycle
for Watford



Reducing Waste

Why is this important?

In [2017/18](#) Hertfordshire households produced average waste of 841kg per household. 44.3% of this was recycled, composted or sent to an anaerobic digestion plant to produce energy, leaving 468kg of residual waste being sent to landfill. By using less and then recycling saves energy and money by avoiding the need to use new materials to make products. It also prevents waste littering our natural environment. By keeping food waste out of landfill sites we prevent the emission into the atmosphere of methane, a greenhouse gas that is 28 times more powerful than CO₂. We can do this by composting it or making energy through anaerobic digestion.

Reducing waste isn't just about looking at waste collection and disposal. It's also about the way we use and consume products. This has a corresponding impact on our use of energy and transport, as well as our impacts on the ecological world. It's easy to forget how much energy has gone into the products we consume; for example, in the extraction of materials, the manufacturing, the distribution and then through the sale. In some cases this process moves items all over the world, and the manufacture and distribution of clothing and footwear alone accounts [for some 8% of global GHG emissions](#). Moving towards a more circular economy can help save both energy and money.

The Government's vision is to eliminate all avoidable waste by 2050, eliminate food waste to landfill by 2030 and ensure that all plastic packaging is recyclable, reusable or compostable by 2025. The UK goal is to recycle at least 65% of municipal waste by 2035, with no more than 10% being sent to landfill.

Burying waste in landfill sites and burning waste has a negative impact on the environment. Harmful chemicals and greenhouse gasses are released and available sites for landfill are becoming harder to find. Waste that is not managed properly pollutes the environment. Locally we see the impact through fly-tipping and litter. But we are also becoming more aware of the global impacts of waste, for example through the images of an ocean ecosystem disturbed by decades of irresponsible and unmanaged plastic disposal.

Watford Borough Council is part of the Herts Waste Partnership which was formed in 1992 bringing together the ten borough and district councils in their capacity as waste collection authorities and the county council as the waste disposal authority. It is one of 50 such partnerships throughout the UK. The aim of the Hertfordshire Waste Partnership is for all households to reduce the amount of waste they produce, as well as reusing or recycling as much waste as possible.

Watford borough's Waste and Recycling is managed by Veolia. The Council and Veolia consistently work to increase recycling rates through to education residents on recycling through regular communication, social media and school/community events. The council also recently undertook community engagement about the waste service and resident views on recycling. The main conclusions from the engagement are that local residents are keen to recycle, acknowledging its benefits to the local environment, the use of limited natural resources and generally seeing it as 'the right thing to do'. Overall, there is a willingness to try to increase food waste recycling through the introduction of a dedicated bin for households to recycle this waste and a weekly collection of mixed dry recyclables. The move to a separate food waste collection from a commingled garden waste bin is an industry standard which delivers improved capture of food waste for recycling which is better both environmentally and economically. Where separate food waste collections are rolled out successfully they also improve resident satisfaction due to improved ease of use. WRAP in their Household Food Waste Collections Guide have highlighted that food waste typically makes up about a third of the residual waste stream. Veolia in partnership with Watford Borough Council recently produced a Waste Compositional Analysis in July 2019, which supports this strategy as food waste was seen to be the major component of residual waste forming 30.5% of the total, equating to 1.4kg/hh/wk. By introducing a weekly separate food waste collection, food waste is encouraged to be diverted from the residual waste bin and into the correct stream for treatment.

In addition to food waste collection the council is proposing to reduce the general black bin waste to bi-weekly. Research shows that around 70% of household waste can be recycled and, to help improve recycling rates, 248 out of 326 local authorities (76%) across England now collect residual waste fortnightly or less frequently.

Plastic is fast being widely recognised as a key pollutant that needs to be tackled. The equivalent of one entire truck of plastic (8 tonnes) is dumped in the sea every minute. That's [12 million tonnes](#) of plastic each year. By 2050 we could have more plastic than fish (by weight) in the sea if we carry on as we are. The Great Pacific Garbage Patch is now [three times the size of France](#) and is rapidly getting worse. Of the 400 million tonnes of plastic produced each year, 40% of that is single-use; which is why the council is committed to eliminating its use of single use plastic. The council has joining up to the Hertfordshire County Council 'Leading By Example' project to eliminate single use plastic from council and its activities. In addition the council is encouraging local bars, cafes and restaurants to reduce their single use plastic by signing up to join the [Refill scheme](#), which is a mission to help both visitors and residents reduce plastic pollution by allowing everyone access to free refillable drinking water instead of buying single-use plastic.

Example Projects for 2020-2023:

- Introduce a scheme by which businesses are encouraged and rewarded for reducing single-use plastics - targeting takeaway premises/business
- Work towards becoming a single-use Plastic Free Council. This will involve auditing our use of single use plastics and replacing them wherever possible with more sustainable alternatives.



NATURE RESTORATION





Nature Restoration

Theme 5: Nature Restoration – Biodiversity, Water & Sustainable Food

Biodiversity

Protecting and enhancing green space is important as it provides a habitat for wildlife and habitats are in [decline](#). Some 75% of the earth's land surface has been significantly altered and over the past 40 years [we have lost 60%](#) of mammals, birds, fish, reptiles, and amphibians. In the UK, 60% of the 3,000 species that have been studied have declined over the past 50 years. 97% of the UK's wildflower meadows have been lost since the 1960s and we have 44 million fewer breeding birds. Around [1 million species](#) face extinction within coming decades. This is not just a loss for the interconnected ecological systems that depend upon these species, it's a loss for us. Natural green spaces are important as they help to clean the air, absorb excessive rainwater to reduce flooding, absorb noise and reduce the 'urban heat island' effects. We also know that having easy access to natural greenspace such as parks and woodland brings [positive effects for mental and physical health](#) and has even been associated with increased longevity. Yet [research has shown](#) that around 12% of children in the UK do not spend any time in natural green space.

Changing temperature and rainfall patterns due to climate change are [part of the reason for this](#), as well as rapid urban and agricultural development. It's imperative that habitats are restored and protected wherever possible so that there is a net-gain in wildlife value.

Trees for instance, provide a vital habitat for birds, insects and small mammals. They also offer shade which will become increasingly important as temperatures increase. They also absorb carbon from the atmosphere. Trees are becoming more susceptible to diseases and pests due to the changing climate and effects of global imports. It is particularly important to retain and protect them wherever possible.

The way that food is produced also has an impact on wildlife as more and more land is given over to agricultural use. Food production, transport and processing is a major source of greenhouse gas emissions. Changing diets to eat less meat and more local and seasonal produce can have large positive impacts. Eating more seasonal fruit and veg isn't just good for the environment, it is also [good for people's health](#).

The Borough of Watford is just over 8 square miles, with an anticipated population of 100,000 people. It is a town with ongoing development and thriving economy. With its proximity to London, transport links and importance to Hertfordshire, it's a town with a great future. However, such growth, whilst having many positive outcomes, also has wider ranging impacts and negative outcomes, in particular the local environment.

Watford has been working for many years on enhancing green space and biodiversity in the borough. Currently it has around 30 well used parks and green spaces, 12 of which have been awarded the national green flag for excellence and Cassiobury Park has been voted one of the top ten parks in the UK. We want to protect and enhance these spaces and develop more as the town grows. There are opportunities to enhance green corridors and make use of the potential to improve verges. Watford has already invested in raising the quality of our parks, with Watford's green spaces have been granted more Green Flag awards than any other district in Hertfordshire. Our open spaces remain popular (for example over 2 million people visited Cassiobury park in 2019). In order to tackle the challenges caused by climate change along with a changing demographic and building infrastructure, Watford Borough Council



"Building insect hotels with schools..."

is committed to further enhancing our environment, including initiatives to the benefit of pollinators. Over the years there have been a number of initiatives nationwide that have tackled such issues including 'Community Forests', 'Environment Cities' 'Pocket Parks', 'Millennium Green / Doorstep Green' and 'Wild-space' projects. The Council had the aspiration to develop longer term and holistic projects that embraces the whole town.

Currently Watford has 5 Local Nature Reserves, 1 Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and 2 river corridors which we value highly. But we also have over 50 parks, over 500 hectares of amenity open space and a number of green corridors and grass verges. We know we are less fortunate than some more rural areas of the country in natural green space and access to Green Belt and we need to tackle this head on. The council have a number of strategies in place to address these issues, including [Watford's Green Spaces Strategy](#), Watford's Tree and Woodland Strategy ([information](#)), [Hertfordshire's Biodiversity Action Plan](#) and [Watford's Core Strategy](#).

These strategies comprehensively address Watford's strategic plan for nature restoration. However, a summary of key information is included below.

Watford's Core Strategy: The Core Strategy sets out the overall vision, strategy and strategic objectives for Watford to 2031 and beyond, including the broad locations in which new development will be accommodated. It also sets out the broad framework for the other documents in the Local Plan and has to be consistent with other strategies including Watford's Sustainable Community Strategy.

Underpinning policies related to green spaces is the Council's commitment to Green Infrastructure (GI), with a range of priorities identified. The council will seek a net gain in the quality and quantity of Green Infrastructure, as well as recognising the benefits of green infrastructure already present and how to enhance and improve it. Any proposals will seek to improve links between sites and not compromise the integrity of the Green Infrastructure network by causing fragmentation, damage to, or isolation of GI assets.

Priorities for Green Infrastructure focus on the projects identified in the Watford Green Infrastructure Plan:

1. Cassiobury Park Enhancement;
2. Whippendell Wood Enhancement;
3. Grand Union Canal Enhancement;
4. Colne Valley Wetland Enhancement;
5. Urban Greening and Legibility for Watford; and
6. Joint working on the Green Herts interactive map

The contribution a development makes to the Green Infrastructure network will be a key consideration when determining planning permission. New development should contribute to the delivery of new Green Infrastructure and the management of a linked network of enhanced open spaces and corridors.

The Woodland and Tree Strategy: Watford's trees within parks, woods, open spaces and the many tree-lined streets form an important component of our landscape, linking the urban area with the surrounding countryside and they contribute to long-term sustainability. They provide many benefits to people's wellbeing and for enhancing the quality of life in the following ways:

- Trees have a positive impact on mitigating the effects of climate change.
- Trees help improve air quality by absorbing pollutants such as ozone, nitrogen oxide, sulphur dioxide and carbon monoxide. Dust and other particulates are trapped by leaves, making the air healthier to breathe and minimising health risks.
- Over a single year, a mature tree removes about 22kg of carbon dioxide from the atmosphere.
- They reduce the "urban heat island effect" of localised extremes of temperature by absorbing radiation which would otherwise be stored and emitted by buildings and highways, leading to towns having a higher temperature than surrounding countryside.
- Trees can play an important part in water management, including safeguarding water quality and contributing to flood alleviation as part of Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (4). Tree canopies intercept rainwater, helping to prevent localised flooding during flash floods.
- By screening traffic, trees can reduce noise pollution adjacent to busy roads.
- They provide a habitat for supporting local wildlife throughout the Borough and green corridors for wildlife migration.

The council is currently responsible for approximately 11,000 trees that are located on:

- Highway verges and streets (as part of a service level agreement with Hertfordshire County Council);
- Parks and public open spaces; and
- Cemeteries and churchyards.

In addition, the council manages thousands of trees across 506 hectares of public open space including the woodlands of Whippendell Wood, Harebreaks Wood, Albans Wood and woodland areas in Oxhey Park, and Orchard Park. Tree and woodland canopy cover is defined as the area of leaves, branches, and stems of trees covering the ground when viewed from above, and is 18.2% across the borough against the average tree canopy cover figure of 16% in England.

The council's trees are managed by Veolia as part of the Parks and Open Spaces maintenance contract and a Service Level Agreement with Hertfordshire County Council. The ownership of trees brings certain legal responsibilities and obligations as to how they should be managed. Watford Borough Council seeks to be a good and responsible manager of trees, to fulfil its duty of care by delivering a programme of tree management aimed at keeping the public and property safe from harm, and by preserving the health and future sustainability of its tree stock.

Water

As well as reducing carbon emissions to reduce the impacts of climate change, we need to make sure we are prepared for the climate changes that are predicted to take place, some of which are already happening. The latest Met Office [Climate Projections](#) provide the most up-to-date assessment of how our climate is likely to change. This highlights key risks such as: surface water flooding, heatwaves and drought for the Borough. In 2018 we witnessed the hottest summer ever recorded, leading to excess summer deaths and an adverse impact on [Hertfordshire's chalk streams](#) (chalk streams are important habitats for species such as [salmon and kingfishers](#)).

Heatwaves can lead to issues like buckling rail tracks, higher demands on water resources, subsidence of houses and buildings, pipe movement and breakages due to soil shrinkage and fires. By the middle of the century we could see summers as hot as in 2018 occurring with a 50% probability. If emissions are not reduced this could rise to 90% probability in the second half of the century, with many summers being much hotter.

In the UK and Europe, flooding is one of the most economically and socially disruptive natural hazards with impacts on transport, housing, infrastructure and energy supply. The River Colne runs through Watford and Water Lane, Lower High Street and Waterfields Way has had [several incidents of flooding during heavy rainfall](#).

The South East of England is classified as a severely water stressed area. This means it gets less rainfall than other parts of the country. In conjunction with this, across the Colne Catchment (which includes Watford), the area uses on average [20 litres per day](#) more than the rest of the UK average. The UK average is also higher than anywhere else in Europe, ([142 litres per person per day](#)). Population is projected to increase 12% by 2025 and 27% by 2045 at the same time climate change is likely to reduce the supply of water (in the Affinity Water area a reduction of 39 million litres of available water per day is expected by 2080). Further risks come from “urban creep” (the loss of permeable surfaces through the continued installation of non permeable patios and/or driveways). The [impact](#) of urban creep on the sewer system is thought to be similar in magnitude to the impact of both population growth and climate change.

Over coming years, households will likely face more [significant restrictions](#) in water usage as we all have to work together to use our resources more wisely. Affinity Water’s aim is to reduce consumption to 129 litres per person per day by 2025.

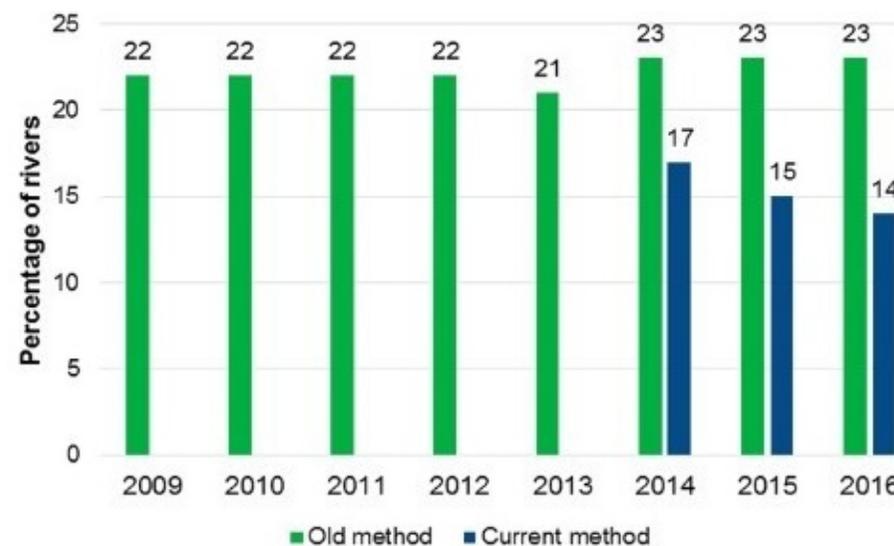
Chalk streams: The chalk streams in England are estimated to account for 85% of the world’s chalk stream habitats. Chalk streams are unique to the world’s ecology that supports a wide array of wildlife and flora and provides a greater biodiversity in England. They depend upon a healthy flow of water and a variety of natural habitats to thrive. Currently the chalk streams are at risk from over abstraction, pollution and climate change.

Groundwater: Most of Hertfordshire’s water comes from sources deep below ground level called aquifers (an underground area that holds water), from which water is extracted through boreholes. Groundwater levels vary throughout the year dependant on the amount of rainfall penetrating through to the aquifer to “recharge” it. It can take as long as 6 months for rainwater to filter through to the aquifer but this is dependent on the location and the amount of rain received. Most recharge is made in the autumn and winter months, during this period less rainfall runs off into rivers, is lost from evaporation or used for plant growth. This gives rise to the highest groundwater levels around April, and lowest levels usually in October.

[Groundwater contributes to around 30% of our drinking water.](#) Ground waters have been deteriorating in quality over the last 60 years. Only [53%](#) achieved good chemical status in 2016. Due to peak nitrate application being between 1980 and 1990 and nitrates taking upwards of 20 years to travel through unsaturated rock (and much longer in some areas) this is expected to continue to deteriorate over the coming years.

River health: Within the UK, the health of the water environment is assessed using the Water Framework Directive. Under this Directive the aim is for all rivers, lakes, reservoirs, streams, canals, estuaries, coastal and groundwater (known as water bodies) to be in good ecological health by 2027.

In 2016, [86%](#) of river water bodies had not reached good ecological status. The main reasons for this are agriculture and rural land management, the water industry, and urban and transport pressures. Although water quality in rivers has improved markedly in recent decades, these improvements have slowed, or not continued in recent years. There was a [1%](#) decline in the number of rivers that were at 'good or better' biological or chemical status in 2016 compared to 2015.



Note: Assessment method changed in 2014

Figure 7: Percentage of rivers achieving good or better ecological status 2009 to 2016

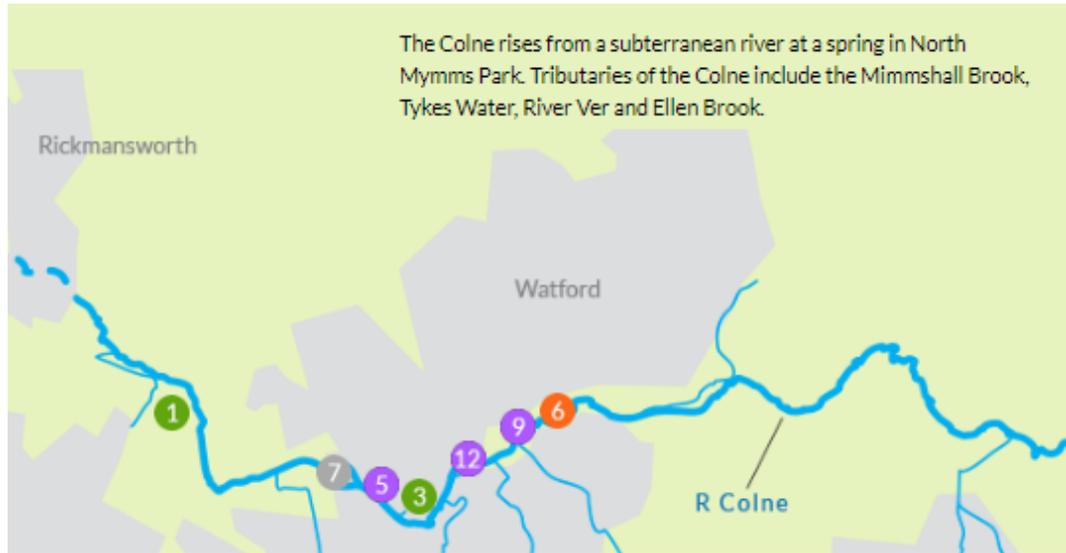
Water conservation

Conserving water is a key part of creating and maintaining environmentally sustainable practice. Currently water generation and wastage emits more than 60kg of CO₂ per person per year. This accounts for 3% of the U.K's total carbon emission per year. The average family use [330 Litres](#) of water a day, which generates almost a tonne of CO₂ emissions per household each year. Even in normal times in southern and eastern England there's less water available than many Mediterranean countries due to [low rainfall and density of population](#). The East of England is the UK's driest region and Hertfordshire is one of the [driest counties](#) with average rainfall returning only two thirds the national average. On average water consumption has dramatically [increased over the last 25 years](#) partly due to power showers and other household appliances such as sprinklers and hoses becoming more common. Residents in Hertfordshire use more water than any other county in the UK ([8% above the national average](#)).

Example Projects for 2020-2023:

- [Rediscovering the river Colne](#): Habitat improvement along the river Colne – 10 year project to bring the Colne into the public realm (example at Oxhey park - introducing marginal berms to encourage scouring flows that clean the river bed).
- Continue to work with HCC/Affinity Water on roll out of water meters, providing local knowledge when needed
- Use the Green Spaces strategy for Watford to increase climate resilience and biodiversity where possible.

Progress so far: River Colne Catchment Action Network – Projects Map



3. Litter Boom at Oxhey Park: The installation of litter boom on the Colne in Oxhey Park to trap rubbish, allowing clearance where the river enters the park.

5. Habitat improvement at Oxhey Park: A project proposed to introduce a series of brushwood berms along the South bank and undertake maintenance works along the existing berms on the North Bank. The aim of which is introducing a greater abundance of this habitat to benefit local wildlife as well as increase channel sinuosity, helping to promote scouring flows that will help clean the river bed.

6. Japanese Knotweed management: A management plan to treat Japanese Knotweed (an invasive non-native species) on Knutsford Park and other areas of the councils land.

9. Watford in the Water: an on-going plan aimed at establishing

regular river clearance events and finding, supporting and co-ordinating stakeholders to help improve, monitor, understand and enjoy our rivers amenity and wildlife, and understand and deal with pollution events, invasive species, misconnections and other river and waterway issues.

Tree planting: Example of the Clarendon Road Project, the High Street Public Realm Project and Church Street where trees have been planted and replaced to provide a total net gain of 11 trees.

Key Project Examples:

Increasing biodiversity in the borough; summarised as follows:-

- 1- A reassessment of all our open spaces, from local nature reserves, SSSI, historic parks (e.g. Cassiobury, Oxhey, King George V, Watford Fields), our 1930s recreation grounds (e.g. Callowland, Waterfields, Lea Farm), river corridors (Colne and Gade), amenity and play spaces, playing fields, grass verges, woodlands, allotments, street trees, historic cemeteries and churchyards and civic space looking at current wildlife value leading to a Green Infrastructure Plan and 'Enhancing Biodiversity Action Plan';

- 2- Establishing a partnership including Herts and Middlesex Wildlife Trust, Natural England, Watford Community Housing, TCV, Groundwork, Herts County Council, Environment Agency, Countryside Management Service, Veolia to Friends Groups, Residents Associations, Environmental Groups active in the town – creating a ‘Wild About Watford’ Forum led by a ‘dedicated Wild About Watford’ project officer(s) and team;
- 3- Develop and deliver improvement plans and projects for key strategic areas and increase the number of Local Nature Reserves from 5 to 10 (River Colne corridor; Oxhey Park Dell; King George V Nature Space; Ebury Way; and North Watford Cemetery);
- 4- Increase space for nature focusing on parks, grass verges and green space in housing areas as well as enhancing the value of street trees;
- 5- Involving communities in Wild space and increasing the number of friends groups, residents groups, schools and non-interested groups in the value of Wild space;
- 6- Evaluate the project and promote as an exemplar UK wide initiative.

Our project will involve a wide range of people in heritage, and in particular natural heritage. We will engage with all communities in Watford, but with an emphasis on groups who have no or limited access to natural green space. The project will significantly improve the condition of the towns green infrastructure, from historic parks to cemeteries to grass verges. Natural heritage will be identified and better valued by the Watford community through direct and indirect involvement. People will have an opportunity to develop skills whether leading or managing groups to conservation work. People within current organisations will be better equipped in management techniques. Through the project, people will have learned about their natural heritage and the value of natural spaces, value to local heritage but to their own wellbeing. Finally, the town of Watford will be a better place to live, work and visit, for people but for wildlife.



People Power



We are all in this together

It is our hope that local businesses, organisations, schools and groups will recognise the scale of the task required and support this strategy by developing their own priorities and plans to improve the sustainability of their day-to-day activities.

A key part of our strategy depends upon residents taking their own action to reduce their carbon footprint and make the right choices. Currently we promote better recycling and reuse practices, help households improve sustainability in their homes and initiate schemes like refill and the new green transport options; but our plan is to devise and deliver an extensive and consistent programme that encourages and supports behavioural change to benefit our environment.

Our campaign will be informed by our community. We plan to survey residents and partners asking for their views on things like what would encourage them to travel more sustainably, get an ultralow emission vehicle, improve the energy efficiency of their homes, recycle more..... We will look to include resident representation to our sustainability projects so that we can all benefit from shared ideas and resources.

We will help residents and business transition to become low carbon. Further information and updates to this strategy will be available on our web page: www.watford.gov.uk/sustainability.

We invite you to email us a link to your own sustainability strategies so that we can learn about what you are doing to help create the healthy, low carbon and sustainable future we all aspire to. You can also e-mail the council sustainability team on sustainability@watford.gov.uk or write to the team at Sustainability, Town Hall, Watford, Herts, WD17 3EX.

How to get involved and learn more:

We will be publishing a newsletter which you can subscribe to through your [MyWatford](#) account. You can also join our social media accounts.

We will continue to let all residents know what we are doing through our About Watford magazine that is sent to every property in Watford.



[Things you can do about climate change](#), Adapted from Imperial College, London, by the Grantham Institute



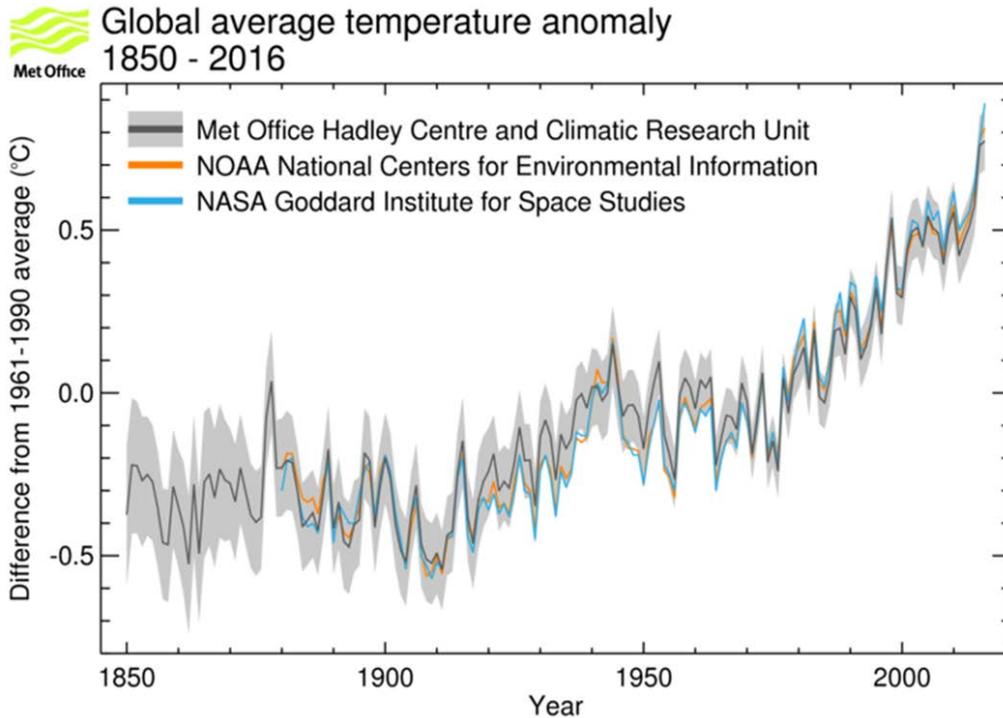
Watford is the happiest place in the south east, and the 14th happiest place to live in the UK ([annual Office for National Statistics \(ONS\) survey](#)). Together we care about our environment and want to strive to continue to make Watford a sustainable and great place to work and live for ours and for future generations.

“Informing our next generation...”

Appendix 1

Climate Change: Compelling us to take action

Climate change is one of the most significant challenges facing us today. [Extensive scientific information](#) tells us that human activities are the primary cause. Burning fossil fuels for energy and releasing other gases such as hydrofluorocarbons (HFC's) from refrigeration and methane from landfill sites, into the atmosphere - are a large part of the problem.



Global temperatures have increased by around 0.9°C since the late 19th century, and continue to [increase by about 0.2°C per decade](#). UK temperatures are increasing even faster. Nearly half of permanent Arctic sea ice by volume has [melted since 1979](#).

Levels of planet-warming carbon dioxide rose by a near-record amount in 2019. Levels of CO2 in the atmosphere have not been as prevalent on Earth for at least 3 million years – a period when the seas were 10-20 metres higher.

The main risks from climate change include extreme heat, flooding, sea level rise, impacts to food and water supplies, and associated economic and migratory impacts.

Figure 8: Global average temperature anomaly. Source of chart: [Met Office](#)

The effects of global warming are being felt in the UK. Met Office scientists found that the probability of extreme weather such as [UK winter flooding](#) has increased due to climate change. Several indicators in the latest [UK State of the Climate report](#) show that the UK's climate is becoming wetter. For example the highest rainfall totals over a five day period are 4% higher during the most recent decade (2008-2017) compared to 1961-1990. Furthermore, the amount of rain from extremely wet days has increased by 17% when comparing the same time periods.



Lower High Street, Watford 2014

There has been growing political pressure on governments, cities and organisations to act by cutting emissions. The 2018 Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) [Special Report on Global warming of 1.5 degrees](#) says that reducing emissions to net zero by around 2050 is needed to prevent the most destructive impacts. The report states that 'climate-related risks to health, livelihoods, food security, water supply, human security, and economic growth are projected to increase with global warming of 1.5°C and increase further with 2°C.

In the UK the Committee on Climate Change (CCC) sets legally binding science-based carbon budgets and recommends policies and actions to drive change. The CCC estimates that UK emissions will need to be reduced by [at least 3% per year](#) from now on, and local councils have [a vital role to play](#).

In the wake of the IPCC 1.5 degree report, the CCC recommended a 'net zero' emissions target for the UK by 2050. 'Net Zero' means that we reduce emissions to as low as we can and then offset any remaining emissions. In response, the UK passed the [Climate Change Act 2008 \(2050 Target Amending\) Order 2019](#) which commits the UK to reducing emissions to net zero by 2050. While details regarding how the UK plans to reach net-zero emissions remain to be set out, the Government has confirmed that it will, broadly, follow the [CCC's framework](#).

The council wish to support this net zero ambition and in line with many other councils, organisations and lobby groups our ambition is to reach net zero by 2030.

Both the costs and benefits of deep decarbonisation are unknowable with any precision. The [CCC state](#) that the costs of this decarbonisation are “[unknowable](#), because they depend on deeply uncertain outcomes, such as the damages from climate change in the long term, and the evolution of the costs of low-carbon technology over several decades”.

The [Green Finance Task Force](#) estimate that investments in infrastructure to meet the fifth carbon budget (spanning 2028-32) will need to be around 1% of GDP (£22 billion) per year, of which public investment would be about £2.2 billion and that approximately 10% of the investment needed to be from public funds. Much of this would be a redirection of, rather than additional, investment. It includes investments in electricity generation (renewables, nuclear, carbon capture and storage), transmission and distribution networks, smart grids (with storage), heat delivery (electric heat pumps, district heating networks or possibly hydrogen-fuelled boilers) to energy-efficient buildings, electric vehicles, using batteries or hydrogen fuel cells, with the associated recharging and refuelling infrastructure, active and public transport infrastructure and carbon capture and storage (CCS).

The costs of climate changes are likely to be substantially more expensive. [Estimates](#) suggest that the damage caused by going beyond 1.5°C, would cost USD 15-38.5 trillion by 2100 (2.3-3.5% of Gross World Product).



UK annual temperature

5 coolest years

1892, 1888, 1885, 1963, 1919

5 warmest years

2014, 2006, 2011, 2007, 2017

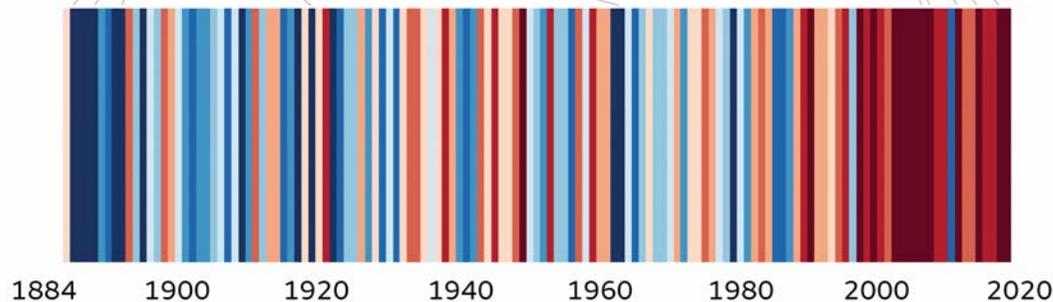


Figure 9: UK annual temperature 1884 to 2020



[Watford Observer reports](#) on Watford’s flooding 2014

CO2 emissions for the borough are detailed later in the Reducing Energy and Emissions section, broken down for the domestic sector, the industrial & commercial and for transport. Figures are also available per capita (as an individual everyone's average carbon footprint has been estimated) by the Department for Business Energy & Industrial Strategy (BEIS). In Watford per capita emissions for 2017 are estimated at 3.65tCO2. This compares well against the UK as an average. Per-capita emissions in the UK fell to 5.4tCO2 in 2018, the lowest since 1858, when the population was less than half its current level. On this measure, the UK now ranks alongside France and well below China (around 7tCO2 per capita), but roughly three times the level in India (1.8tCO2).

However although emissions per capita allow comparison between areas of different population size reasons for variances are not straight forward. For example Wales, Yorkshire and the Humber and Northern Ireland have the highest emissions per capita. This is mainly due to higher emissions per capita from the industrial and commercial sector reflecting the industrial base present in these regions. Similar to Watford Greater London has the lowest per capita emissions, as the urban nature of the transport system and the high population density results in lower emissions than the UK average when total emissions, including non-domestic emissions, are spread across residents. Since 1990, the UK has cut its emissions faster than any other major economy in the world, even as its GDP has continued to grow. This has mainly been due to the rapid change from using coal fired power stations to using renewables (for example energy generated by off shore wind turbines).

Carbon Offsetting

Carbon offsetting allows individuals and organisations to compensate for any emissions they cannot avoid or reduce, by paying for an equivalent amount or emissions to be removed elsewhere. Emissions saving projects range from planting trees to installing solar panels, often, but not exclusively, in developing countries.

Whilst this approach is positive because it allows polluters to pay for remedying their impacts, there are also complexities which need to be considered. For instance, is the project verified, reliably and permanently absorbing CO₂ from the atmosphere? Is it 'additional' meaning that it wouldn't have happened otherwise? One of the concerns of carbon offsetting is that it can allow large polluters to continue business-as-usual operations whilst reporting environmental improvements.

Offsets which meet the Government criteria can be included within the Council's greenhouse gas emissions report. Reductions would be noted as part of the net CO₂e figure. The gross figure would still need to be reported.

There is also the possibility of offsetting some of the council's emissions outside of the borough but remaining in the UK. An example of this would be the council installing a solar farm. As Watford's available land space is more limited this could be a purchase of a farm outside of the borough.

THEME	REF.	ITEM	PRIMARY LEAD	NOMINATED DELIVERY OFFICER	Notes	OTHER LEAD	Estimation of project financial scale	Financial capital commitment	Commencement date:	Completion date:	Other Notes:
Leading By Example	1.1	Establish a cross-service Sustainability Board with resources and clear corporate support for action to forward the actions in this plan. The group will meet regularly, include senior representatives as well as technical officers and will report to the Sustainability Forum.	Councillor Ian Stotesbury or Tim Williams	Elaine Tuck Andy Smith Neil Walker Helen Fisher Andrew Cox Kathryn Robson Alan Gough Alison Scott	Group Head of Commercial Head of Transport and Infrastructure Energy & Renewal Surveyor Group Head of Place Shaping Group Head of Transformation Group Head of Corporate Strategy and Communications Group Head of Community & Environmental Services Head of Finance						The role of the Sustainability Board: 1) Have oversight 2) Develop the strategy ongoing 3) Baseline and track progress 4) Critically assess projects, time lines, budget requirements and progress 5) Report to SLT and OLT plus Sustainability Forum
Leading By Example	1.2	Develop KPIs for climate action and build these measures into the performance management system of the Council – include a sustainability assessment in all that we do (such as cabinet reports) and consider when implementing new projects (see also 1.4)	Kathryn Robson	Kathryn Robson	Beginning to happen now as each service KPI's are developed and will include sustainability. Once the KPI's are developed this will then become the responsibility of each department. For the whole council this is expected to be in place by end 2021 and commence post appointment of service head.		Minimal to none	No capital	Jan-20	Jul-20	
Leading By Example	1.4	Complete Sustainability Impact Assessments across the Council to ensure that issues and impacts are addressed early in the project management, development and procurement process. An SIA needs to be completed for new projects, policies and large purchases (see 1.2).	Kathryn Robson				Minimal to none	No capital	Jan-20	Jul-20	
Leading By Example	1.5	Review and update the Council's Sustainable Procurement Policy with clear criteria and guidance on how to select the most sustainable options when making purchasing decisions, setting contract specification and managing contracts. As part of this we will ensure that our Procurement Rules require that suppliers demonstrate the best possible environmental option and adhere to the Council's Sustainable Procurement Strategy.	Elaine Tuck	Howard Hughes			Minimal to none	No capital	Mar-20	Jul-20	
Leading By Example	1.6	All large contracts will include sustainability performance measures and carbon reduction targets wherever appropriate to do so.	Elaine Tuck	Howard Hughes	Could this be assessed via Strategic LT? Needs to happen early in a projects design. Helen is on the major projects forum: (http://watvmgapp1/mgMeetingAttendance.aspx?ID=2498)		(Low) <£10k	BC no income	Mar-20	Jul-20	Template to officers that have sustainability consideration = HH; Major Projects Forum - Set up by Manny for developers - Major contracts - WBC contacts; Separate development projects - Primary Lead Helen Fisher
Leading By Example	1.7	Undertake an annual review of all Council contracts due for renewal over the forthcoming year to assess current sustainability impacts and methods of making improvements at the next contract upgrade.	Elaine Tuck		Via the sustainability Forum a procedure needs to be established.		(Low) <£10k	BC no income	Mar-20	Jul-20	
Leading By Example	1.8	Incorporate sustainability and carbon reduction to staff induction, contracts and job descriptions.	Terry Baldwin	Need to allocate an HR lead officer for all sustainability issues	Anita Koos Weaver		Minimal to none	No capital	Jan-20	Mar-20	
Leading By Example	1.9	Develop a sustainability eLearning module to be completed by all staff during induction and then on an annual basis as part of the yearly Performance Review process.	Terry Baldwin	HR lead officer for all sustainability issues	Anita Koos Weaver		Minimal to none	No capital	Jan-20	Jul-20	
Leading By Example	1.10	Deliver ongoing engagement and awareness raising to staff, contractors and service providers on sustainability issues and solutions through the quarterly staff newsletter, intranet, website, staff emails and direct training. Particular teams will require specialised training (e.g. Building Service).	Kathryn Robson	Linda McKeown	Regular and consistent section within the staff news letter		Minimal to none	No capital	Jan-20	Jul-20	
Leading By Example	1.11	Deliver strong and consistent messages to the public about sustainability, the environment and climate change through the Council's publicity channels which include the Community News publication, press releases, social media, events and the Building Futures website.	Kathryn Robson	Linda McKeown			Minimal to none	No capital	Mar-20	ongoing	
People Power	1.12	Encourage and support community engagement	Kathryn Robson	Linda McKeown			Minimal to none	No capital	Mar-20	ongoing	
People Power	1.13	Deliver a climate change and sustainability public engagement programme to empower local citizens, organisations and businesses and help overcome barriers to action.	Kathryn Robson	Linda McKeown			Minimal to none	No capital	Jul-20	ongoing	
Leading By Example	1.14	Promote the possible joint venture for managed utility services to businesses throughout the borough (commercial partnership opportunity via Laser)	Andrew Cox		Laser contract stays with Andrew with economic development/procurement with new group head. Business case assessed by end of 2020.		(Low) <£10k	BC with income	Mar-20	Dec-20	
People Power	1.15	Lobby government and for local policy to introduce more stringent sustainability policy in areas such as building, housing, renewable technologies, energy, water, waste and habitat protection.	Ian Stotesbury	MD/Mayoral/Councillor led			Minimal to none	No capital	Jan-20	ongoing	
Reducing Energy Use and Emissions	2.1	Analyse and report on our annual corporate greenhouse gas emissions and progress towards our targets via the website and the Council's annual Performance Report. Look to automatize the process through BMS systems and a managed analysis solution	Andrew Cox	Elaine Tuck	Linked to 1.14 as a managed utility service could aid with our GHG reporting. Business case assessed by end of 2020 financial year.		Minimal to none	No capital	Apr-20	Apr-21	
Reducing Energy Use and Emissions	2.3	Re-procure the Council's water supply to ensure best price and centralised billing of water accounts. This will allow us to monitor water consumption the same way as we do energy.	Andrew Cox		As part of the corporate asset management to be developed when head of service starts		(Low) <£10k	BC with income	Mar-21	Mar-21	
Reducing Energy Use and Emissions	2.4	Undertake an annual review of the community-wide CO2 emissions published by the Department of Business Energy and Industrial Energy.	Alan Gough	Neil Walker	Herst Growth Board - 8-10 districts signed emergency,		Minimal to none	No capital	Sep-20	September each year	Stats published yearly around July by BEIS
Reducing Energy Use and Emissions	2.5	Explore approaches to allocate greenhouse gas emissions reduction targets to individual Departments and services.	Elaine Tuck	Sustainability Forum			Minimal to none	No capital	Mar-20	Dec-20	
Reducing Energy Use and Emissions	2.6 a	Develop a structured plan of action to undertake energy and renewable technology audits of every Council owned premises to identify the most cost-effective means to decarbonise our property portfolio and upgrade their energy performance certificate ratings. This will include properties managed by 3rd parties such as the leisure centres. Low carbon heat sources such as heat pumps or heat networks will need to be explored (using cost neutral improvements through schemes such as Re:FIT).	Andrew Cox		Operational buildings - including Town Hall and Leisure Centres	Alan Gough	(High) £100k plus	BC with income	Apr-21	Mar-22	Starting on the larger buildings working through the whole port folio through to 2022
Reducing Energy Use and Emissions	2.6 b	Develop a structured plan of action to undertake energy and renewable technology audits of every Council owned investment properties to identify the most cost-effective means to decarbonise our property portfolio and upgrade their energy performance certificate ratings. This will include properties managed by 3rd parties such as the leisure centres. Low carbon heat sources such as heat pumps or heat networks will need to be explored (using cost neutral improvements through schemes such as Re:FIT).	Elaine Tuck	Martin Jones	Investment portfolio - (i.e. Intu)		(High) £100k plus	BC no income	Mar-20	Mar-21	
Reducing Energy Use and Emissions	2.7	Undertake a high-level analysis of our emissions, realistic trajectory towards becoming net zero, and costs and options to most effectively and cost-efficiently decarbonise our buildings. This will include existing buildings, buildings in development and contractor managed buildings.	Elaine Tuck	Andrew Cox	Will have an asset management plan to be developed end of 2020 financial year		Minimal to none	No capital	Mar-20	Mar-21	
Reducing Energy Use and Emissions	2.8	Implement the recommendations of the energy audits to decarbonise the Council's property portfolio.	Andrew Cox				(High) £100k plus	BC with income	Apr-21	tbc	
Reducing Energy Use and Emissions	2.9	Investigate the sustainability options available through our current utilities suppliers and supply manager (Laser); such as purchase and promotion to business of 'green' electricity.	Andrew Cox	Howard Hughes	To provide a summary of the possible projects to consider for the sustainability forum - investigate options by June 2021		(Low) <£10k	BC with income	Apr-21	Jun-21	
Reducing Energy Use and Emissions	2.10	Keep abreast of technological advances and novel technologies such as hydrogen power, heat and power battery storage and hybrid heat pumps so that we can exploit opportunities when appropriate.	Elaine Tuck	All: via Sustainability forum			Minimal to none	No capital	Mar-20	ongoing	

Reducing Energy Use and Emissions	2.11	Seek opportunities to reduce emissions further from IT equipment. As part of the re-procurement of the server infrastructure and network switches, investigate options to significantly reduce power use for cooling.	Andrew Cox		happening as business as usual - links into 1.6 and 1.5 have a look into sustainability part of procurement		(Medium) £11-£100k	BC with income	Mar-20	ongoing	
Reducing Energy Use and Emissions	2.13	Make use of opportunities in new developments through HART housing and other partnerships to ensure exemplary energy efficiency standards	Elaine Tuck		Report to be taken to HART Board for sustainability to be considered for a higher priority		(High) £100k plus	BC no income	Mar-20	Dec-20	
Reducing Energy Use and Emissions	2.14	Review our assets to investigate the possibility of using land or developments for a large-scale energy generation to enable us to produce our own energy and decarbonise our operations, and as a means of income generation and energy resilience. Include options such as solar, battery storage opportunities	Elaine Tuck				(High) £100k plus	BC with income	Mar-20	Dec-20	
Reducing Energy Use and Emissions	2.15	Through planning policy: Develop a Council-wide construction standard for new-builds and refurbishments to ensure that high standards of energy efficiency and sustainability are incorporated to building design and construction to achieve appropriate zero carbon buildings standard. Government have provided Planning Authorities with the green light to go above and beyond Building Regulations. This policy should also address material sourcing requirements to reduce carbon impacts of product transport. Government aspirations include the Future Homes Standard, the commitment to phase out fossil fuel heating installations off the gas grid, and aspirations and initiatives around home retrofits (EPC band C by 2035) and low-carbon heating. The Future Homes Standard for example, will ensure new build homes have low-carbon heating and world-leading levels of energy efficiency by 2025. The World Green Building Council also provide frameworks as does Passivhaus.	Helen Fisher	Ian Dunsford	A council-wide standard will refer to policy requirements set out in the Local Plan (expected to be adopted in 2021). This would apply to private and public sector developments. The Government is currently consulting on increasing energy efficiency requirements in Part L of the Building Regulations by 19% above current standards. In addition Watford Council are considering their options to implement standards above this. Low carbon heating and power should be supported on schemes above a set threshold. Areas suitable for this have been identified in the SW Herts Renewable and Low Carbon Energy Study (2010).		Minimal to none	No capital	Jul-20	Sep-21	
Reducing Energy Use and Emissions	2.16	Develop a carbon offset opportunity funding: i.e. Haringey Council uses the requirement in London for zero carbon homes to allow builders to offset the final few % of making a home zero carbon through providing the council with money for low carbon action elsewhere (at a price of around £60 per tonne for 30 years). This will soon be extended to commercial properties. Outside of London examples such as Milton Keynes use Section 106 agreements to require housing developers to provide them with £200 per tonne of first year emissions from each house.	Helen Fisher	Ian Dunsford	The Council will explore ways to identify how monies can be raised e.g through potential projects like a carbon off set fund to appropriately use to improve energy efficiency of existing buildings.		Minimal to none	No capital	Apr-20	Dec-20	
Reducing Energy Use and Emissions	2.17	In the new Local Plan, seek to allocate suitable areas of land within the borough for renewable and low carbon energy and heat.	Helen Fisher		The Energy Opportunites Plan (2010) can be used as a reference to identify general areas where community scale schemes may be suitable. Encourage renewable and low carbon energy and heat.		Minimal to none	No capital	Apr-20	Sep-21	
Reducing Energy Use and Emissions	2.18	Accelerate the conversion of streetlights to LED by supporting Herts County Council in their upgrade programme. We will upgrade our own street lighting and develop a policy for Council owned street light operating hours to ensure a safe environment for residents whilst also reducing light pollution and energy consumption. We will aim that a proportion of new street lights should be replaced with integrated EV charging units where possible.	Helen Fisher	Andy Smith			Minimal to none	No capital	Mar-20	Dec-20	
Reducing Energy Use and Emissions	2.19	Seek opportunities to support vulnerable and low-income households by making use of Energy Company Obligation funding to improve the energy efficiency and warmth of their homes and reduce excess winter deaths. As part of this we will ensure that we make best possible use of the 'Flexibility Eligibility' so that local householder who need it, are able to access support.	Alan Gough	Neil Walker			(High) £100k plus	BC no income	ongoing	ongoing	
Reducing Energy Use and Emissions	2.20	Signpost the community to sources of advice and information on reducing energy consumption, managing their energy bills, renewable technology and tackling fuel poverty. We will also promote national grants, subsidies and initiatives as they become available.	Alan Gough	Neil Walker			Minimal to none	No capital	ongoing	ongoing	
Reducing Energy Use and Emissions	2.21	Implement incentive schemes such as the Community Carbon Assistance/Loan as a delivery mechanism for an ongoing programme for improving the energy efficiency of homes in the borough.	Alan Gough	Neil Walker	Development of the scheme could also take place with strong interest form other LA authorities, opportunities for fee charging etc.. which could all be developed with suitable resource.		(High) £100k plus	BC no income	Apr-20	ongoing	
Reducing Energy Use and Emissions	2.22	Respond to complaints from tenants in the private rented sector and enforce the requirements of the Housing Health and Safety Rating Scheme (HHSRS) and the minimum energy efficiency standards to reduce the hazard of excess cold. Where homes aren't adequately heated, landlords will be requested to carry out energy efficiency improvements.	Alan Gough	RRO			Minimal to none	No capital	ongoing	ongoing	
Reducing Energy Use and Emissions	2.23	Establish how the Council might more proactively monitor and enforce Minimum Energy Efficiency Standards given the existing resources to do so.	Alan Gough	Sam Richards			Minimal to none	No capital	Jan-20	Dec-20	
Reducing Energy Use and Emissions	2.24	Incorporation of a district heat network to the town hall (top of high street development); progress via feasibility assessment by Refit	Kathryn Robson	Colleen Scales	Alan Gough/Neil Walker are developing a proposal via ReFit	Neil Walker	(High) £100k plus	BC with income	Jan-20	Sep-21	
Improving Transport & Air Quality	3.1	Participate and develop the HCC Sustainable travel town application as part of a wider ranging strategy to cover low carbon transportation in the borough;	Helen Fisher	Kate Warwick	Initial HCC project meet in January 20. Currently working with HCC on a Mass Rapid Transport project. Reducing the burden on existing infrastructure by developing new and imaginative ways of accessing the town centre, including a transport hub, click and collect bus, cycling and electric vehicle initiatives.		(High) £100k plus	BC no income	Jan-20	tbc	
Improving Transport & Air Quality	3.2	Widen the remit of the existing projects in the Sustainable Transport Board to develop strategies.	Helen Fisher		Carry out 6 month review		(High) £100k plus	BC no income	Mar-20	Jun-20	
Improving Transport & Air Quality	3.3	Expand electric pool car scheme	Helen Fisher		Currently negotiating with contract holder and working with Development Management and private developers to deliver a larger provision of electric vehicles. (Coordination is also required between local authorities and other providers to ensure the supporting infrastructure such as charging points, are consistent).		(Medium) £11-£100k	BC no income	Jan-20	Dec-20	
Improving Transport & Air Quality	3.4	All Council fleet where possible will be replaced with ultra-low emission vehicles or electrical vehicles at the end of life. This will include service vehicles such as those required for parking enforcement and the recycling collection vehicles.	Alan Gough		Services will have to bid, Need to review with veolia the £ bid. Vehicle asset list - June 2020 - Growth bids Sep 2020 implementation in 2021 post current lease ending.		(Medium) £11-£100k	BC with income	Jun-20	Apr-21	
Improving Transport & Air Quality	3.5	Explore options to reward lower emissions vehicles through the Essential Car Allowance. Explore ways to incentivise staff to choose low carbon travel methods. As part of this would be to incentivise cycling by providing a mileage reimbursement for business trips travelled by bike.	Terry Baldwin				(Medium) £11-£100k	BC no income	Jan-20	Dec-20	
Improving Transport & Air Quality	3.6	Ensure computer systems are set up to best make use of laptop video conferencing facilities, thereby reducing the need for travel.	Andrew Cox		This project is due for completion March 2020		(Low) <£10k	BC no income	Jan-20	Mar-20	
Improving Transport & Air Quality	3.7	Introduce the Cycle to Work scheme for staff and develop incentives such as purchase of tax-free bicycles and equipment.	Terry Baldwin		already done but positive incentive to use bikes (i.e. claim miles) vs car		(Medium) £11-£100k	BC with income	Jan-20	Jun-20	
Improving Transport & Air Quality	3.8	Undertake a comprehensive study to evaluate the most cost-effective and practical options to increase EV charging infrastructure across the borough. This will increase our understanding of future needs, management options, costings, and inform our policies on residential charging and appropriate requirements for new developments.	Helen Fisher		Currently negotiating with contract holder and working with Development Management and private developers to deliver a larger provision of electric vehicle. Identify relevant sites which are to include rapid charger provision.		Minimal to none	BC no income	Jan-20	Dec-20	
Improving Transport & Air Quality	3.9	Develop a strategy, and associated incentives, to reduce emissions from authority-authorised taxis. This will include programmes to encourage electric vehicles	Alan Gough	Justine Hoy	Taxi strategy in progress, further scheme development will be required after the strategy is approved in June 2020.		(Medium) £11-£100k	BC no income	Jan-20	Jun-20	
Improving Transport & Air Quality	3.10	Begin implementation of the EV charging infrastructure program; applying for and utilising OLEV Funding as appropriate (e.g. WBC Car parks, leisure centres and key office sites). Include Rapid charging.	Helen Fisher	Andy Smith			(High) £100k plus	BC no income	Jan-20	Dec-20	

Improving Transport & Air Quality	3.11	Explore options to convert parking spaces to secure cycle storage where there is a demand from 40% of households on the street.	Helen Fisher	Andy Smith		(Medium) £11-£100k	BC no income	Jan-20	Dec-20	
Improving Transport & Air Quality	3.12	Continue to develop and implement the measures of our Air Quality Management Plan to reduce emissions from road transport and improve air quality.	Alan Gough	Nick Egerton		(Medium) £11-£100k	BC no income	Jan-20	Ongoing	Ongoing commitment and annual report to DEFRA
Improving Transport & Air Quality	3.13	Widely promote Idling Campaigns to raise awareness of the impact of idling vehicles on health and air quality. Children and parents will be the core focus of the campaign as well as using enforcement officers to raise awareness and possibly enforce anti-idling.	Alan Gough	Justin Bloomfield	Research & proposal by 2020, Pilot 2021 - Full rollout 2022. Also included in conjunction with the local plan (Ian Dunsford)	Minimal to none	No capital	Mar-20	Apr-22	
Improving Transport & Air Quality	3.14	Utilise existing relationships with businesses (e.g. Env Health) to promote anti idling (e.g. Screwfix, restaurants on indoor air pollution)	Alan Gough			Minimal to none	No capital	Jan-20	Dec-20	
Improving Transport & Air Quality	3.15	Comms campaign targetting schools on walking buses and ways to avoid air pollution	Kathryn Robson	Linda McKeown		Minimal to none	No capital	Mar-20	Dec-20	
Improving Transport & Air Quality	3.16	Create comms for website/CSC that provides information on indoor and outdoor air quality and how best to protect vulnerable adults and children	Kathryn Robson	Linda McKeown		Minimal to none	No capital	Mar-20	Dec-20	
Improving Transport & Air Quality	3.17	Widely promote Idling Campaigns with council delivery partners	Alan Gough	Darren Harding		Minimal to none	No capital	Mar-20	Apr-22	
Improving Transport & Air Quality	3.18	Investigate and implement options to restrict permits/licences for services and traders that need to idle their engines.	Alan Gough	Jamie McKenzie	Conditions for the permit.	Minimal to none	No capital	Jun-20	Dec-20	
Improving Transport & Air Quality	3.19	Install utility access points in the city centre for traders and events staff to avoid the need for idling engines and generators	Helen Fisher	Andy Smith	Rex Cassidy had met with Andy Smith to discuss requirements, currently awaiting a programme of works to be sent through to A Smith for costing. Works to be costed include enabling power supply underground for the market traders.	(Medium) £11-£100k	BC no income	Jan-20	Dec-20	
Improving Transport & Air Quality	3.2	Introduce a bike share scheme to Watford - expected to launch March 2020	Kathryn Robson	Alistair Napier	Bay locations to be confirmed 16th December.	(High) £100k plus	Funded	Jan-20	Mar-20	
Improving Transport & Air Quality	3.21	Introduce demand responsive transport (DRT) - expected March 2020	Kathryn Robson	Alistair Napier		(High) £100k plus	Funded	Jan-20	Mar-20	
Improving Transport & Air Quality	3.22	Introduce Transport App to bring together all modes of transport in the borough. Inclusion of DRT and bike share March 2020	Andrew Cox	Emma Tierman		(High) £100k plus	Funded	Jan-20	Mar-20	
Improving Transport & Air Quality	3.23	Determine a strategy for Local Cycling, Walking and Infrastructure Plan. Expected by August 2020	Kathryn Robson	Kate Warwick		Minimal to none	No capital	Jan-20	Aug-20	
Improving Transport & Air Quality	3.24	Develop business case for parking sensors (using smart tec to identify spaces). Project development proposal by end 2020	Andrew Cox			(Medium) £11-£100k	BC no income	Mar-20	Dec-20	
Reducing Waste	4.1	Deliver ongoing improvements to the Council recycling scheme with regular staff awareness-raising around office recycling.	Andrew Cox	Head of CA management		Minimal to none	No capital	Mar-20	Dec-20	
Reducing Waste	4.2	Increase recycling of waste	Alan Gough	Darren Harding		Minimal to none	Funded	Jul-20	Ongoing	
Reducing Waste	4.3	Develop a Waste and Sustainability Policy for Council events particularly focusing on waste reduction and elimination of single-use plastics.	Alan Gough	Ruth Young	Action Plan on single use plastics - note for events???	Minimal to none	No capital	Nov-20	Jun-21	
Reducing Waste	4.4	Continue to work towards a paperless strategy for Council transactions and internal operations within 2020 project as well as ongoing review and improvement.	Andrew Cox		2020 review has enabled digital transition where appropriate. Other aspects such as new print contract to go live by August 2020 supporting less devices through the use of multi functional devices.	Minimal to none	Funded	Jan-20	Aug-20	
Reducing Waste	4.5	Raise awareness of the recycling services through the provision of community talks, regular communications, promotional roadshows, Waste Aware initiatives and market stalls. We also provide compost giveaways.	Alan Gough	Sheila Chauhan	RLH Waste Aware, Compost giveaways. Veolia Community talk, roadshows, schools, Comms a combination	Minimal to none	No capital	Jan-20	Ongoing	
Reducing Waste	4.6	Promote recycling to schools in partnership with Herts County Council and the waste contractor by attending assemblies and workshops. Attention will be focused on promoting food waste collections.	Alan Gough	Sheila Chauhan		Minimal to none	No capital	Jan-20	Ongoing	
Reducing Waste	4.7	Work towards becoming a single-use Plastic Free Council. This will involve auditing our use of single use plastics and replacing them wherever possible with more sustainable alternatives.	Alan Gough	Ruth Young	Get Detail for strategy	Minimal to none	No capital	Mar-20	Dec-20	
Reducing Waste	4.8	Introduce a scheme by which businesses are encouraged and rewarded for reducing single-use plastics - targeting takeaway premises/business	Alan Gough	Ruth Young	Watford BID as an example area. Once set up EHO's can promote during food visits.	Minimal to none	No capital	Mar-20	Dec-20	
Nature Restoration	5.1	Consider and incorporate initiatives for improving the wildlife value of all Council owned new buildings or when doing external works to existing buildings.	Andrew Cox	Alan Gough	Considered in conjunction with the asset management plan (to be delivered end of financial year 2020) - Also consider a Biodiversity Strategy (Alan Gough)	(Medium) £11-£100k	BC no income	Mar-20	Dec-20	
Nature Restoration	5.2	Incorporate refuge areas for wildlife, green corridors and wildlife friendly and perennial planting wherever possible to new buildings.	Helen Fisher	Alan Gough	The local plan will require developers to have an assessment of biodiversity on their proposed development site and set out how they can improve this by 10% (biodiversity net gain). This should contribute towards a Biodiversity Strategy (Alan Gough) and an overarching green infrastructure strategy. The woodland and biodiversity strategy currently being prepared by WBC could provide more value if it was clearer about how the biodiversity network can be improved through specific and strategic projects and set out a path as to how these can be achieved. Also considered as part of our asset management plan - Andrew Cox	Minimal to none	No capital	Jan-20	Sep-21	Consider Green Infrastructure Strategy
Nature Restoration	5.3	Develop a scheme for 'rewilding' parts of Council land to increase biodiversity.	Helen Fisher		also air quality -	(Medium) £11-£100k	BC no income	Mar-20	Dec-20	
Nature Restoration	5.4	Negotiate with the County Council for new ways of managing grass verges and trees alongside highways.	Alan Gough	Paul Rabbitts	Part owned by HCC. Wider Tree Strategy. Green Spaces Strategy - Planning document. Wild about Watford £5m	Minimal to none	No capital	Mar-20	Dec-20	
Nature Restoration	5.5	Implement the actions and objectives of the Tree Strategy which aims to ensure that trees and woodlands within the borough are adequately protected, cared for and supported by new planting. We will actively seek to significantly increase the number of trees in the borough and prevent removal of trees where possible.	Alan Gough	Paul Rabbitts		Minimal to none	BC no income	Mar-20	Ongoing	
Nature Restoration	5.6	Use the Green Spaces strategy for Watford to increase climate resilience and biodiversity where possible.	Alan Gough	Paul Rabbitts		Minimal to none	No capital	Mar-20	Ongoing	
Nature Restoration	5.7	Comms campaign for residents and businesses to increase water efficiency	Kathryn Robson	Linda McKeown		Minimal to none	No capital	Mar-20	Ongoing	
Nature Restoration	5.8	Continue management of invasive non-native species and provide spaces for habitat improvement	Alan Gough	Paul Rabbitts		Minimal to none	No capital	Jan-20	Ongoing	
Nature Restoration	5.9	Continue to work with HCC/Affinity Water on roll out of water meters, providing local knowledge when needed	Alan Gough	Neil Walker		Minimal to none	No capital	Jan-20	Ongoing	
Nature Restoration	5.1	Habitat improvement along the river colne at Oxhey park introducing marginal berms to encourage scouring flows that clean the river bed.	Alan Gough	Paul Rabbitts		(Medium) £11-£100k	Funded	Jan-20	Dec-20	
Nature Restoration	5.11	"Watford in the water" initiative to deal with pollution events, invasive species, misconnections and other river and waterway issues	Alan Gough	Paul Rabbitts		(Medium) £11-£100k	Funded	Jan-20	Dec-20	
Nature Restoration	5.12	Explore the feasibility of introducing Grey/Rain Water harvesting on new developments for incorporation on 2023 Sustainability Strategy & Action Plan	Helen Fisher			Minimal to none	No capital	Mar-20	Sep-21	

Part A

Report to: Cabinet

Date of meeting: Monday, 2 March 2020

Report author: Head of Parks, Heritage and Culture

Title: An Allotment Strategy 2020-2025

1.0 Summary

1.1 In 2013, the Council adopted a 5 year Allotment Strategy based on a significant consultation exercise carried out in 2011 on the state of our allotments. This strategy had a significant impact on how we manage our allotment stock and what improvements were required. Based on the success of this 5 year strategy, in 2019, a new consultation exercise was carried out and has led to an updated strategy from 2020 for the next 5 years.

1.2 The results of the consultation exercise are summarised in the new strategy.

2.0 Risks

2.1 No risks are identified

3.0 Recommendations

3.1 To note the contents of the report and attached strategy

3.2 To approve and adopt the strategy for the next 5 years

Further information:

Paul Rabbitts

paul.rabbitts@watford.gov.uk

Report approved by: Alan Gough, Group Head of Community and Environmental Services

4.0 Detailed proposal

4.1 The adoption of the 2013-2018 Strategy was a milestone in the development and management of allotments in Watford. The outcome was a number of key policies and action plans leading to significant investment in allotments across the town. As part of the development of this new strategy, all policies and actions have been reviewed and where still relevant, included in this new and revised strategy. However, the following successes should be noted from the last 5 years:-

- £800,000 investment in our allotments with improvements to fencing, water provision, footways, introduction of toilets, signage;
- Occupancy rates have remained high, between 85-90% overall;
- Successful re-provision of Farm Terrace tenants and the successful extension at Paddock Road allotments;
- Successful promotional campaigns across the borough using a wide variety of media;
- An allotments forum established and successfully meets bi-annually and last met in February 2020;
- Terms and conditions fully updated and the tenancy agreement updated;
- Clear guidance on animal welfare from the RSPCA issued where relevant;
- Stricter regulations on non-cultivations;
- Rents reviewed annually; and
- The successful award of a Green Flag for Paddock Road Allotments in 2017, 2018 and 2019.

However, a number of actions require carrying forward with further work required including:-

- The role of the site supervisor;
- The lack of enthusiasm for self-management;
- Tackling waiting lists;
- Maintaining occupancy rates and vacancies on some sites; and
- Improving local biodiversity on sites.

4.2 As a result, an updated strategy has been developed and is based on consultation carried out with tenants in 2019. The feedback was excellent and is summarised below. The overall response rate was 43% with over 427 survey forms returned. Figures in brackets indicate 2011 survey results.

Many people have had an allotment for many years. However, several have recently taken up allotment gardening only recently.

14% (17%) less than a year; 40% (45%) 1 to 5 years; 18% (14%) 6-10 years; 15% (12%) 11 to 20 years; 13% (12%) more than 20 years +

77% of respondents stated that it would have been helpful if the plot had been pre-prepared before letting

The main reason why tenants have an allotment is to grow their own - 76% of respondents; get fresh air and contact with nature - 70% of respondents; keeping fit and healthy - 53% of respondents.

Most people only have only one plot and choose their site because of convenience to home. - 87% of respondents chose this as the main reason.

The quality of current allotment sites ranges but overall 95% (92%) of allotment tenants rate their site as average to excellent and only 5% (8%) as poor to very poor.

The most essential items on an allotment are water, secure boundary fencing and maintenance of vacant plots.

Visiting their allotments, the majority visit three times or more a week 79% (75%).

33% (55%) travel by car with 54% (35%) who walk. The majority take no longer than 10 minutes to get there 83% (88%).

On average, each visit lasts 3 to 4 hours per visit 50% (53%).

A vast range of crops are grown on plots, but the most popular are root vegetables and green vegetables.

94% only grow with 6% having livestock (chickens and bees)

87% of tenants have a shed

91% of tenants compost their own waste

66% of ploholders were dissatisfied with the level of maintenance on untended plots

88% of tenants felt that the level of rent was reasonable

60% of tenants felt that a dedicated allotment officer was a good idea

52% of tenants were supportive of a rental increase, although 44% said it depended on by what amount

82% of tenants supported offering a plot to residents outside the borough but subject to paying a higher rent and subject to agreeing a distance from Watford.

Allotment Tenant Profiles

Male - 50% (57%)

Female – 50% (43%)

White British – 80% (95%)

20% (16%) have a disability

16-24 years – less than 1%

25-34 years – 6% (5%)

35-44 years – 18% (15%)
45-54 years – 19% (19%)
55 – 59 years – 11% (12%)
60-64 years – 14% (14%)
65+ years – 31% (34%)

4.3 One of the key issues that was raised was the suggestion to employ a dedicated but permanent part time allotment officer. The retention of site supervisors remains a challenge with a number of sites still without one. The performance of some site supervisors is also mixed. The question of whether a dedicated resource would help with the day to day management of allotments was raised with tenants and whether they would be prepared to accept an increase in rents to pay for this. This was supported in the survey results and as a result, a growth item was approved in January 2020 at Council to assist in the funding of a new officer, to be employed by Veolia.

4.4 A new Action Plan has been developed and is attached as part of Appendix A.

5.0 **Implications**

5.1 **Financial**

5.1.1 The Shared Director of Finance comments that the financial implications are contained in the report, any additional investment will require a growth bid as part of the budget process.

5.2 **Legal Issues (Monitoring Officer)**

5.2.1 The Group Head of Democracy and Governance comments that the legal implications are contained within the strategy

5.3 **Equalities, Human Rights and Data Protection**

5.3.1 Having had regard to the council's obligations under s149, it is considered that an EqIA is not required as this is an updated strategy that has undergone significant consultation with no impact on equalities, human rights or data protection.

Having had regard to the council's obligations under the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) 2018, it is considered that officers are not required to undertake a Data Processing Impact Assessment (DPIA) for this report.

5.4 **Staffing**

5.4.1 Not applicable

5.5 **Accommodation**

5.5.1 Not applicable

5.6 **Community Safety/Crime and Disorder**

5.6.1 Not applicable

5.7 **Sustainability**

5.7.1 The adoption of a strategy to manage our allotments adds to the Councils wider sustainability agenda and Climate Change Emergency. The importance of retaining, managing our allotments as important green spaces is essential to this wider agenda as well as increasing the biodiversity of them.

Appendices

- Appendix A – Watford Allotments Strategy 2020-2025

Background papers

No papers were used in the preparation of this report.

Watford Allotments Strategy



Contents



2020-2025



- 1. Aim and purpose of the Watford Allotments Strategy**
- 2. Introduction**
- 3. Background information and strategic context**
- 4. Review of 2013-2018 strategy**
- 5. Facts and figures – the current position in Watford**
- 6. Other factors to be considered for the future provision of a high quality allotment service in Watford**
- 7. Future management and future demand? Local authority or allotment association?**
- 8. Promotion and encouragement of allotment gardening**
- 9. Management arrangements – building relationship with tenants**
- 10. External funding and investment**
- 11. Improving biodiversity on allotment sites**
- 12. Key policies and action plan**
- 13. Monitoring and evaluation**



1.0 Aim and purpose of the Watford allotments strategy

Aim

“To maintain and where appropriate, improve the quality, management and promotion of Watford Borough Council allotment sites, and to offer access to this unique leisure activity to all members of the Watford community”.

Purpose

This allotments strategy reviews Watford Borough Council’s allotment provision with the overall intention of providing a well-managed service offering good quality allotments throughout the borough, in the most cost effective manner over the next 5 years (2020-2025), whilst also taking note of factors which could impact on allotments beyond this period. Integral to this review will be:

1. To ensure that the strategic aims of this strategy compliment and support the overall aims of the council and link to national initiatives; and
2. To consider the most effective way of providing an allotment service for gardeners in our community through the following measures:
 - How the allotments are managed and administered;
 - How the allotments are funded;
 - How the quality of allotments can be improved further particularly with regards to biodiversity;
 - To ensure that there is an adequate stock of allotments to meet the present and future needs of our communities; and
 - To ensure the benefits of allotment gardening are promoted to all sections of the community.



2.0 Introduction

Allotments have been part of our urban and rural communities for over 150 years. They were created to empower those on low incomes to improve their quality of life, health and diet, by growing their own food. The common land these people worked was the remains of land that had once been communal agricultural land.

The General Enclosure Act of 1845 made the provision of allotments for the 'labouring poor' mandatory and introduced the concept of landlord and tenant for allotment land. The 1908 Allotments Act made allotments the responsibility of local authorities and the 1922 Allotments Act made allotments available to all, not simply those on low incomes.

The use of allotments peaked during World War II as people responded to Britain's 'Dig for Victory' demand for self-sufficiency, with one and a half million plots being cultivated. During this period 1,300,000 tonnes of food per annum was grown on 1,400,000 plots, which was nearly 1 tonne of food per plot. Post war Britain saw a fall in allotment use due to changes in society with 'cheap' food and the negative stereotyping of allotment gardening as the leisure pursuit of those on low incomes, or the white, retired male.

Allotment law was last updated under The Allotments Act 1950, but there remains the need for alteration in the law to reflect changes in allotment gardening. In modern allotment gardening people of all ages and backgrounds are creating vibrant communities that produce fresh, healthy food and offer a healthy lifestyle too. In 1998 the Department of Environment, Transport and the Regions published a White Paper on the Future of Allotments. 'A Good Practice Guide' from the Local Government Association has followed this. Both documents highlight the contribution that allotments make to an improved quality of life.

Allotment gardening remains a very popular leisure activity in the UK because it offers a relaxing alternative to the stressful pace of modern day life, improving health and wellbeing. Increasingly allotments are being valued for their therapeutic benefits in providing a quiet refuge, where people can have the sense of gardening in the country, within an urban environment.

The Local Government Association however, estimated that more than 200,000 allotments have been lost in the last 35 years, totalling over eleven square miles, an area 15 times the size of Hyde Park.

Despite these losses, there continues to be a demand for allotments, with an estimated 78,827 people on waiting lists in the UK compared to 13,000 in 1996. This is now an average of 52 people waiting for every 100 plots. Another reason for this demand for allotments is increasing concerns over the safety and quality of our food. Food scares and the poor vitamin and mineral quality of food grown in depleted, intensively farmed soils, have led to an increasing awareness of the value of home grown produce, free of chemicals. This desire for 'home grown food' and concern over environmental damage from 'air miles' is leading many people to turn to allotment gardening as a means of producing healthy, fresh, locally produced food that is often organically grown.

This concern over our diet is acknowledged at government level with increasing concern over obesity in the population. Public health campaigns are consistently highlighting the necessity of a diet high in fruit and vegetables, along with adequate exercise.



- In 2016/17, there were 617,000 admissions in NHS hospitals where obesity was a factor. This is an increase of 18% on 2015/16.
- In 2016, 26% of adults were classified as obese. This has increased from 15% in 1993 but has remained at a similar level since 2010.
- In 2016, 26% of adults and 16% of children consumed 5 or more portions of fruit and vegetables a day.
- In 2016/17, 1 in 5 children in Year 6 and 1 in 10 children in reception were classified as obese.

A study published in *The Journal of Public Health* in September 2016 found that:

Overall, the findings of this study indicate that one single session of allotment gardening can improve both self-esteem and mood, irrespective of how long participants spend on the allotment, whether they have attended in the last 7 days and their overall length of tenure. Furthermore, allotment gardeners have a better level of self-esteem and mood and a reduced level of abnormal psychological functioning than non-gardeners. Thus, in order to improve health and well-being, people in the UK should be encouraged to take part in short bouts of allotment gardening. Health organizations and policy makers should consider the potential of allotment gardening as long-term tool for combatting the increasing prevalence of ill-health and local public authorities should seek to provide community allotment plots to allow residents to have regular opportunities to partake in gardening activities.

Despite increasing affluence in Britain the original need for allotments as a means of improving the quality of life for those on low incomes remains. Studies have revealed that under-nutrition still remains a problem in the UK.

“One of the major causes is poverty. It is estimated that nearly 14 million people in the UK live in households with incomes below the European poverty line of half the average income. Diets in low income households are characterised by less dietary variety and poorer nutrient profiles. Dietary surveys of British adults have reported lower intakes of many vitamins and minerals, particularly vitamin C, beta-carotene, vitamin E and iron in those who are unemployed, receiving benefits or in the two lowest social classes. Similar results have been reported for young children and schoolchildren; those from manual social classes or less-advantaged homes had lower vitamin and mineral intakes. Low income is also associated with lack of knowledge and skills related to food, nutrition and cooking.”

British Nutrition Foundation ‘Under-nutrition in the UK’ 2003.

So although the demand for allotments has varied during the twentieth century, the twenty-first century is seeing the continuation of a strong allotment revival as people turn to allotments as a means of enhancing their health; physically, mentally and emotionally. As far back as 1998 a select Committee of the Department for the Environment, Transport & Regional Affairs published a report called “The Future for Allotments” supporting the practice of devolving a share of the responsibility for managing allotment sites to local allotment societies / associations (known as devolved management). In recent years, many local authorities have adopted this practice of looking at devolving management to allotment associations. Watford Borough Council has been partly proactive on this initiative



and has so far entered into only one agreement (2011) with an allotment association and has looked to develop further agreements but without success.



3.0 Background information and strategic context

As part of the process of developing this revised and updated allotments strategy, it is important to recognise the council's overall wider community aspirations and overarching policies as well as emphasise any national context that is relevant to allotments. This is important as it adds value to the strategy, ensures national and corporate aims are linked to service delivery plans and ensures that funding is targeted to the relevant areas whilst desired outputs and results are achieved.

In 2002, Watford Borough Council drafted its first **Allotment Strategy**. At the time, the strategy stated that:-

"The Council believed that the future of allotments was secure and provided multiple benefits, not just to gardeners, but also to the environment and the wider community. The Strategy's aim was to maximise the numbers of people using allotments by promoting opportunities to all residents. It aimed to protect all allotment sites and ensure the provision of attractive, safe allotment sites with a good standard of service and infrastructure. Finally, the aim of the strategy was to protect and enhance the wildlife value of allotment sites."

The previous strategy also highlighted 14 objectives and whilst these were important at the time, these were re-assessed and where relevant, incorporated into the following strategy covering 2013-2018. This last strategy has been reviewed below – see Section 4.

3.1 National, Regional and Local Strategic Context – Policy Review

National

- **Allotment Waiting Lists in England**

(Published by Margaret Campbell and Ian Campbell - Transition Town West Kirby in conjunction with the National Society of Allotment and Leisure Gardeners 2013)

This survey of the allotment waiting lists held by the English principal local authorities is an update of similar surveys carried out in 2009, 2010 and 2011. All 323 English principal authorities were surveyed in January 2013, and 321 responded. The main findings were:

- 215 (67%) of the authorities held waiting list data;
- This data was for a total of 3,558 allotment sites (averaging 17 sites per council);
- These allotment sites contained 152,432 plots (averaging 43 plots per site);
- The waiting lists for these plots totalled 78,827 people; and
- This is an average of 52 people waiting for every 100 plots.

Compared to the similar survey 2 years ago, the average waiting list has changed from 57 to 52 people waiting per 100 plots. In view of the considerable uncertainties around the total figures, this is best summarised as allotment waiting lists remaining high. New allotment sites were brought into use by 51 councils in the last two years. The total number of new sites was 65. For the 58 sites where information was supplied, the total area of the new sites was 30 hectares, and the total number of plots on these new sites was 1,950. In conclusion, waiting lists for allotments remain high. Even at a time of budgetary restraint, a strong argument can be made for a large increase in allotment provision because:-



- Food grown on allotments means fewer food miles, and could be an important part of the new greener low-carbon economy;
- Allotment sites often provide a focus for a community, and improve community cohesion · growing one’s own food is an important part of a healthy-eating programme;
- Allotments offer a productive activity for the unemployed;
- Local and national government reports have been promoting the benefits of allotments for some time; and
- Local authorities have a statutory duty to provide sufficient allotments.

Regional and Local

- **The Core Strategy 2006-31**

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 our planning strategy and policies in more detail. All other Local Plan documents must be consistent with the Core Strategy.

The council will continue to have regard to the remaining saved policies of the Watford District Plan 2000 and includes policies on allotments:-

Leisure Objective 9.4 (3) *To ensure the retention of allotment land for horticultural purposes or other uses compatible with its status as open space. Such uses include wildlife areas, leisure gardens and orchards.*

L12 Allotments – *The Council will protect existing public and private allotments and will ensure equivalent replacement where affected by development proposals.*

Where allotments become surplus to demand, other forms of public open space or facilities for the wider community which maintain the openness of the site, will be preferred before other land uses are considered.

The Local Plan noted that there are 12 statutory allotments serving the Watford population but that the distribution is poor with a particular shortage in the high density residential areas of North and Central Watford. It highlights that the opportunity to provide new sites will be very limited so it is therefore important to retain existing sites where a demand exists. It is however important to emphasise that where sites are affected by development, a replacement site must be secured.

- **Watford Corporate Plan to 2020**

Our vision reflects our approach to the current challenges and opportunities facing the council and the town as a place to live, work, visit and study. We want to champion our town so that it is a place where all our communities thrive and prosper, benefitting from strong economic growth and good quality local services and facilities. This will require the council to be innovative, explore new ways of working and champion initiatives that will transform the town and the organisation. More of the same isn’t going to secure the future we want for Watford, which is why bold and progressive lie at the heart of our ambitions.

Supporting this vision, the council has five priority areas of work. Our priorities are critical to the Council achieving successful outcomes for its ambitions for the town.



Our **FIVE** priorities are:-

- Identify ways to manage the borough’s housing needs;
- Champion smart growth and economic prosperity;
- Provide for our vulnerable and disadvantaged communities;
- Deliver a digital Watford to empower our community; and
- Secure our own financial future.

In addition, our core, day to day business underpins everything we do and all of our work and effort contribute to our success. In particular, we recognise the importance of three core objectives which at all times makes us a more effective organisation, in touch with our residents and delivering in the areas and in a way that they expect. These are:

- Effective two-way engagement and communication;
- Sound management and high performance; and
- Improving the town’s environment.

Listening to local people and ensuring they have the opportunities to influence decisions is essential if we are to focus on what matters most to our communities. We are committed to understanding needs and ensuring everyone has an opportunity to have a say.

Through consultations and engagement our community has told us what is important to them and the town. This has been reflected in our new corporate priorities but it also influences the work we do to deliver these priorities.

Priorities for the borough 2017

The survey also asked people about their priorities for the borough.

The top choices were:

Priority	% response
Ensuring a vibrant and prosperous local economy that offers a range of jobs and opportunities for local people	48.5%
Keeping the town clean and our streets free from litter	38.6%
Working with community safety partners to tackle issues and make Watford even safer for our communities	38.0%
Creating a well-connected borough with good infrastructure such as better transport links	37.4%
Supporting our more vulnerable residents so that they can live independent lives	35.5%
Protecting and enhancing our parks and open spaces	31.5%
Helping to provide a range of new homes that meet local needs, including more affordable homes	30.2%

Total responses: 1,095



- **Green Spaces Strategy 2013-2023**

The Council's adopted 10-year Green Spaces Strategy (GSS) is the overarching policy document for green space throughout the borough. It covers parks, open spaces, natural green space, children's play, playing fields as well as allotments.

The aim of the strategy was that:

"Watford will have a network of accessible, high quality valued green spaces to be proud of, promoting sustainability, supporting biodiversity and extensively contributing to the economic, social and environmental aspirations of the town."

The strategy set a number of objectives that included:-

- To provide clear policies for the provision of Green Spaces; and
- To provide clear policies for the management of Green Spaces.

Allotments are defined within the Green Spaces Strategy as *"Opportunities for those people who wish to do so to grow their own produce as part of the long term promotion of sustainability, health and social inclusion."*

The GSS acknowledges the existence and importance of allotments and the role they play. In the past few years, there has been as significant improvement in the service, which is reflected in the growing occupancy rates (66% in 2002, 89% in 2006 and 91% in 2011) and a satisfaction level of 73%, which had risen to 92% in 2011 and was 89% by 2018.

The GSS is due to be reviewed in 2020 and will include further updated policies from this revised allotments strategy but will underpin the importance of allotments to our green infrastructure.





4.0 Review of 2013-2018 Allotments Strategy

The adoption of the 2013-2018 Strategy was a milestone in the development and management of allotments in Watford. The outcome was a number of key policies and action plans leading to significant investment in allotments across the town. As part of the development of this new strategy, all policies and actions have been reviewed and where still relevant, included in this new and revised strategy. However, the following successes should be noted:-

- £800,000 investment in our allotments with improvements to fencing, water provision, footways, introduction of toilets, signage;
- Occupancy rates have remained high;
- Successful re-provision of Farm Terrace tenants and the successful extension at Paddock Road allotments;
- Successful promotional campaigns across the borough using a wide variety of media;
- An allotments forum established and successfully meets bi-annually;
- Terms and conditions fully updated and the tenancy agreement updated;
- Clear guidance on animal welfare from the RSPCA issued where relevant;
- Stricter regulations on non-cultivations;
- Rents reviewed annually; and
- The successful award of a Green Flag for Paddock Road Allotments in 2017, 2018 and 2019.

However, a number of actions require carrying forward with further work required including:-

- The role of the site supervisor;
- The lack of enthusiasm for self-management;
- Tackling waiting lists;
- Maintaining occupancy rates and vacancies on some sites; and
- Improving local biodiversity on sites.

These will be included in the Action Plans for this strategy.



5.0 Facts and Figures – the current position in Watford

As previously stated, there are 12 allotment sites within the Watford Borough Council boundary with only one currently self-managed as an association. A small number of allotments also exist which are managed by Network Rail.

Site Location	Managed by	Size and Status	Occupancy Rates (2019)
Garston Manor Horseshoe Lane	Veolia	Size of site – 2.31ha 107 Plots Waiting List – 1	95%
Briar Road	Veolia	Size of site – 0.51ha 37 Plots Waiting List – 10	100%
Cherry Tree Berry Avenue	Cherry Tree Allotment & Garden Association	Size of site – 0.93ha 51 Plots Waiting List – 15	100%
Callowland Leggatts Way	Veolia	Size of site – 6.5ha 301 Plots Waiting List – 17	93%
Tavistock Road Radlett Road	Veolia	Size of site – 0.33ha 19 Plots Waiting List – 5	85%
Timberlake Radlett Road	Veolia	Size of site – 1.52 116 Plots Waiting List – 27	89%
Chester Road	Veolia	Size of site – 0.32ha 21 Plots Waiting List – 8	100%
Holywell Vicarage Road	Veolia	Size of site – 2.34ha 84 Plots Waiting List – 12	90%
Brightwell Tolpits Lane	Veolia	Size of site – 2.35ha 126 Plots Waiting List – 1	87%
Wiggenhall Longcroft	Veolia	Size of site – 0.74ha 44 Plots Waiting List – 0	86%
Oxhey Grange Oxhey Avenue	Veolia	Size of site – 2.12ha 90 Plots Waiting List – 11	88%
Paddock Road Lower Paddock Road	Veolia	Size of site – 7.47ha 222 Plots Waiting List – 17	81%

NB Figures September 2019 and do change

Those directly managed by Veolia are overseen by the Community and Environmental Services Department and the Parks and Open Spaces Section.



Since outsourcing of the service in 2013, Veolia are responsible for all aspects of allotment management including:

- The administration and collection of fees and charges;
- Letting of vacant plots and liaison with allotment supervisors;
- Ensuring that the rules and regulations are adhered to;
- Resolution of disputes;
- Promotion of allotments;
- Ensuring that all allotment plots are cultivated and where they are not, operate a system for positively monitoring and re-letting them; and
- Ensuring that sites are maintained and repairs undertaken.

The fees and charges are generally reviewed every year by Watford Borough Council. This has not always been the case but rents were increased substantially in 2011/12. These were increased for the first time in several years to bring them in line with the national average. Watford Borough Council continues to encourage the management of a number of allotments through associations and self-management and this has been promoted over several years and has been carried out when opportunities have arisen. Partnerships are seen as a way of improving the occupancy levels at allotment sites and, by giving responsibility for the day to day operation of the sites to Associations, it is considered that they would be better managed.

As part of the process for producing this final strategy, in 2019 we consulted **all** allotment tenants on Council and Association managed sites.

The results of this survey are summarised on in Section 6.



Current Provision

There are now 12 sites in Watford totalling just over 27 hectares. This is equal to 0.36ha per 1000 people (3.6m² per person). There is good access to allotments in the north and south of the borough but little access from the central strip.

Current shortfalls

The National Society of Allotment and Leisure Gardeners (NSALG) suggests a national standard of 20 allotments per 1000 households (ie 20 allotments per 2,000 people based on 2 people per house) or 1 allotment per 200 people. This equates to 0.125 hectares per 1000 population (1.25m² per person) based on an average plot size of 250m².

Based on the current provision Watford is well over the NSALG standard, however as stated, the majority of allotments are in the north and south of the borough with less provision in the central area.



6.0 Other Factors to be considered for the Future Provision of a High Quality Allotment Service in Watford

When the 2002 Allotments Strategy was developed, little was known what tenants thought about the provision of allotments in the borough and we knew little about the profile of our allotment tenants. We also knew little of what our tenants considered important in relation to allotment provision.

We know that the profile of a typical allotment gardener has changed and that more women and younger people are taking up allotment gardening. As part of the development of the 2013-2018 strategy, we consulted in 2011/12 with all our allotment tenants and the feedback shaped that 5-year plan. In 2019, we once again consulted and the results are highlighted below. The overall response rate was 43% with over 427 survey forms returned.

Figures in **bold** are from the 2019 survey and those in brackets are from the 2011 survey.

Many people have had an allotment for many years. However, several have recently taken up allotment gardening only recently.

14% (17%) less than a year; **40%** (45%) 1 to 5 years; **18%** (14%) 6-10 years; **15%** (12%) 11 to 20 years; **13%** (12%) more than 20 years +

77% of respondents stated that it would have been helpful if the plot had been pre-prepared before letting

The main reason why tenants have an allotment is to grow their own - **76%** of respondents; get fresh air and contact with nature - **70%** of respondents; keeping fit and healthy - **53%** of respondents.

Most people only have only one plot and choose their site because of convenience to home. - **87%** of respondents chose this as the main reason.

The quality of current allotment sites ranges but overall **95%** (92%) of allotment tenants rate their site as average to excellent and only **5%** (8%) as poor to very poor.

The most essential items on an allotment are water, secure boundary fencing and maintenance of vacant plots.

Visiting their allotments, the majority visit three times or more a week **79%** (75%).

33% (55%) travel by car with **54%** (35%) who walk. The majority take no longer than 10 minutes to get there **83%** (88%).

On average, each visit lasts 3 to 4 hours per visit **50%** (53%).

A vast range of crops are grown on plots, but the most popular are root vegetables and green vegetables.

94% only grow with **6%** having livestock (chickens and bees)



87% of tenants have a shed

91% of tenants compost their own waste

66% of ploholders were dissatisfied with the level of maintenance on untended plots

88% of tenants felt that the level of rent was reasonable

60% of tenants felt that a dedicated allotment officer was a good idea

52% of tenants were supportive of a rental increase, although **44%** said it depended on by what amount

82% of tenants supported offering a plot to residents outside the borough but subject to paying a higher rent and subject to agreeing a distance from Watford.

Allotment Tenant Profiles

Male - **50%** (57%)

Female – **50%** (43%)

White British – **80%** (95%)

20% (16%) have a disability

16-24 years – less than 1%

25-34 years – **6%** (5%)

35-44 years – **18%** (15%)

45-54 years – **19%** (19%)

55 – 59 years – **11%** (12%)

60-64 years – **14%** (14%)

65+ years – **31%** (34%)

In October, 2018 we also held our second allotments forum at Watford Colosseum and debated a number of allotments issues and asked for feedback generally. These are highlighted below.



SUMMARY OF FEEDBACK FROM ALLOTMENTS FORUM 2018

Interest in stakeholder forums
More meetings required
Can we encourage greater take up with disabled groups?
Stakeholder panel needs fresh blood

Issues

Security
Improved maintenance
Better engagement would lead to more volunteers doing more
More definition of non-cultivation
Advertising on site for plots available
Could keys be posted?
Assistance on plots that are let and are overgrown
Overgrown plots can't be let - sort out those unlettable
Rubbish left on plots after tenants give up
Newsletter to all tenants from Veolia
Better communications
Allow non-residents plots but at an enhanced rate – lots of support for this
Green Flag?
Water turned off on sites that have livestock
Funding of allotment officer
Slow response from Veolia and communications with site supervisors needs improving
Plots overgrown by the time they are available to let
Stricter on non-cults
Repairs take too long
Deputy site supervisors for larger sites
Promotion of allotments needs improving
Increase rents gradually to fund an allotment officer
Allotment officer should be funded by the council not rent increases
More interest in the stakeholder panel
Use of noticeboards needs improving
Dogs allowed on sites but on leads?
Should BBQs be allowed?
Support for dedicated allotments officer
Water leaks an issue
Large trees on some plots an issue
Takes too long to re-let a plot when vacated
Allow tenants to keep plots if they move out of Watford
Display T&C on site
More than 1 supervisor per site
Plot preparation for new tenants
More areas for wildlife
Cover vacant plots
Increase rent level to get better maintenance

7.0 Future management and future demand? Local authority or allotment association?

“A lively allotment society can negotiate, liaise, work with, local councils, local firms, local sponsors of a variety of kinds and local voluntary groups, schools, social service departments, environmental food growing organisations, local civic trusts....., to develop events, to encourage people to visit the site for particular purposes, perhaps ecological work, and enabling youngsters to participate in repairing buildings, clearing areas and things like that, in ways that give people a responsibility, a responsiveness to the environment ... in a sense allotment holding has been sustainable for much longer than the word sustainability has existed and in a sense it offers a great example of good ways of using the environment.”

Rio Summit of 1992

It is felt that self-management fulfils the twin aims of ensuring greater control of a site by allotment holders and also reducing a local authority's administrative responsibilities. A previous government report recommended that all local authorities examine the potential for self-management of their allotment sites.

It recommended the drawing up of an appropriate model agreement that can be used by local authorities formally to devolve responsibilities to allotment societies. In particular, it should make provision for a local authority to take back control of a site in exceptional circumstances.

In Watford, all sites are controlled by Veolia on behalf of Watford Borough Council with the exception being Cherry Tree which is now managed by an allotment association. Despite the general satisfaction with allotments in Watford, the Council see the benefits in developing association managed sites and are keen to promote the benefits of allotment associations. However, if there is no specific desire for these sites to be managed by an association, the Council will continue to manage each site accordingly. The 2002 and 2013 Allotment Strategies highlighted the need to explore devolution of management. It recognised for plottolders, *“devolution can bring more responsive management on a day to day basis, a sense of pride in any improvements to the site, and opportunities for volunteers to bring their skills and expertise to a new challenge”*.

The 2011 survey highlighted that only 19% of tenants were keen to look at self-management. Attempts were made to deliver self-management solutions at Callowland, Oxhey Grange (2015 – 73% voted to remain under council management) and Paddock Road Allotments (2015 – 89% voted to remain under council management), but without success. The Council will continue to support any site that wishes to look at self-management but will no longer pursue actively as a distinct action.



8.0 Promotion and encouragement of allotment gardening

The present information shows that all the allotment sites in Watford are very popular with relatively high occupancy levels (some being at full capacity with waiting lists). We now have updated and detailed local data (2019) available which shows there are increasing numbers of women and younger people from wider social and economic backgrounds starting to take allotment plots but there is still more work that could be done to encourage a wider profile of usage, particularly amongst schools, disabled groups, minority groups and to promote the health agenda. As well as physical problems such as obesity (which has increased locally), heart disease and the need to take more exercise, there is also the opportunity for allotments to tackle psychological issues such as stress. At the same time there are a number of sites with some vacant plots which could be promoted locally. Consideration is also to be given for making available plots to non-residents but within a defined radius.

Encouragement and initiatives

Despite the relative high demand, there is however a number of reasons for people not wanting to rent allotment plots. Many do not enjoy gardening and would not rent a plot whatever was offered. For others there is a range of initiatives which could encourage new gardeners and which should be considered:

- For the Council to arrange for an overgrown plot to be tidied prior to letting even if there was a recharge for providing this service. The problem with this is that many gardeners take the plot, find that it is too difficult and lose interest. The plot remains overgrown and another gardener is offered the plot. They also find it too difficult and the cycle continues;
- Offer plots to residents outside of the borough where vacancies exist;
- Larger plots to be resized if requested;
- Produce booklets to give advice and advise new gardeners e.g. How to Get a Garden, Clearing an Overgrown Plot, What to Grow, Basic Skills, Composting etc.;
- The production of a newsletter to share information between allotments and Associations;
- The development of the Council's existing allotment website. This could link to other complimentary sites e.g. Community Food Project, Green Gym, the Allotment Regeneration Initiative (ARI), the National Society of Allotment Gardeners (NSALG), sources of external funding;
- For existing gardeners to offer advice to new gardeners;
- To provide new gardeners with starter packs which could include advice sheets, a range of seeds and the offer of a mentor to help offer advice;
- A poster campaign to promote the benefit of allotments;
- To sponsor an annual allotment competition; and
- To hold an annual allotments fair when members of the local community can inspect a site, talk to a site supervisor and take up a prepared plot on the same day. This would be aimed at people who are perhaps curious and wanting more information about what having an allotment entails.



9.0 Management arrangements – building relationships with tenants

Considerable progress has been made with building relationships with tenants through the allotments forum, improved communications and the investment on most sites. There are a number of further ways management arrangements can be improved which should lead to an improvement in relations with tenants. These will include:-

- Role of allotment supervisors re-assessed;
- Option of appointing a part time dedicated allotments officer (subject to funding); and
- Re-focussing and further support of the allotments stakeholder panel;

Allotment site supervisors

Each site is allocated a dedicated site supervisor which is a volunteer appointed from one of the local tenants and is site specific. This has worked well in some cases but unfortunately in others, we have been unable to appoint and retain such positions. These sites have then had to be 'managed' by an officer from Veolia which has been challenging with regards to site monitoring, letting and monthly reports. The council's view is that a dedicated resource is required to enable a more positive management focus on all sites.

A dedicated allotment officer

The management of allotments prior to outsourcing was through the two parks development officers who were responsible for a number of areas, including allotments. The management of this area was always 'resource heavy' and this remains the case now the responsibility lies with Veolia. The Horticultural Development Manager within Veolia has a wide portfolio of responsibility including allotments and currently only 10% of that role is dedicated to allotments. The appointment of a part time but dedicated allotments officer would improve the day to day management of our allotments and relationship with tenants. However, this requires funding, estimated at £25,000. Options include:-

- Refocus of the Veolia contract and re-allocation of funding from elsewhere. This would mean ceasing something elsewhere;
- Increase allotment rents over a period of time to cover this, over and above inflation. There are currently 140 vacant plots at present that if were fully occupied would bring in c£6,000 - £7,000 a year. This would offset some of these costs; and
- Seek partnership funding through a public health / healthy eating initiative.

This will be a key action within this strategy, as whilst the quality of the allotments has improved, there is a greater need to focus on management and day to day liaison with tenants. The 2019 survey highlighted support for this initiative and for an increase in rents to cover this, although dependent on the level of increase.





10.0 External funding and investment

In most cases rent will be the only income derived from an allotment site and expenditures will be manifold. These include not only site maintenance and repair but also administrative costs and promotion. They cannot be sustained without adequate finance. Levels of rent generally are currently the national average, although very low compared to allotments in London.

The following factors are taken into account when setting allotment rents:

- Long term financial sustainability;
- The nature, quality and cost of facilities provided (and desired);
- Expenditure on promotion and administration;
- The present level of rent and its historic tradition; and
- The likely effect of rent levels on plot take-up.

Rent concessions are permitted by allotment law and are granted by Watford Borough Council to the following tenants:-

- Housing Benefit, in the form of Rent Allowance or Local Housing Allowance for people living in rented accommodation;
- Council Tax Benefit;
- Income Support;
- Job Seekers Allowance (income based);
- Working Tax Credit and /or Child Tax Credit;
- Guaranteed Pension Credit (not 'Savings Pension Credit'); and
- Employment and Support Allowance (Income based).

Allotment rents are also governed by the provisions of section 10 Allotments Act 1950, which speaks of allotment rents being that which

“ . . . a tenant may reasonably expect to pay . . . ”.

This is invariably objective to the allotment site rather than subjective to the tenant, and there is provision in s. 10 for a lesser rent to be charged where circumstances might warrant this. However, the charging of any such lesser rent is in the discretion of the local authority. A local authority is under no mandatory obligation to provide water, or fencing, or pathways, or anything over and above the bare earth for cultivation. Where water, etc., is provided, a tenant may expect to pay a realistic rent.

In 2019, nationwide the cost an allotment varied considerably for a 10 pole plot. Rents have been increased considerably with a recent headline was 300% over 5 years in Nottingham in 2018 and similar in Edinburgh.

Rental examples across the London area are currently:-

- £175-00 in Richmond on Thames
- £171-00 in Brent
- £193-00 in Merton
- £200-00 in Greenwich
- £140-00 in Enfield
- £79-00 in Harrow



Rental examples outside the London area are currently:-

- £50-00 in Liverpool
- £79-00 in Brighton
- £185-00 in Poole
- £47-20 in St Albans
- £88-00 in Stevenage

The cost in Watford in 2019 for a standard site is £54-70 and therefore remains affordable to local residents, with agreed concessions as detailed above.

The Council is also fortunate that it receives funding through Section 106 / CIL Developer Contributions and has continued to allocate funding through its capital programme to improvement of open spaces as well as a number of allotment sites in recent years.



11.0 Improving biodiversity on allotment sites

Biodiversity means the variety of life around us. Allotments provide valuable wildlife habitats that make a major contribution to maintaining Watford's biodiversity, even when fully operational as productive allotments. This is of considerable importance as many parts of Watford are densely developed and many houses have small gardens, or no gardens at all. Allotments are therefore important "green lungs" for the town.

Some sites contain old hedges, significant large trees and support populations of scarce, protected species, including stag beetles and slow worms. The allotments provide foraging and nesting areas for invertebrates, small mammals, birds, reptiles and amphibians. Slow worms, like hedgehogs and frogs, are popular with allotment tenants as they subsist largely on a diet of slugs.

Sites with significant wildlife interest include Callowland, Oxhey Grange, Paddock Road and Holywell.

There is considerable scope to develop the wildlife value on some areas of allotment land that are unlikely to come back into use or on the margins of full sites. Biodiversity and allotment gardening benefit from this positive use of unused plots compared to the alternative of neglected and derelict plots.



12.0 Key policies and action plan

Key Policy 1: To ensure sufficient stock of allotments at the recommended quantity and quality standard and to meet the present and future needs of Watford's community.

Reference	Action	Who	Timescale
1.1	To regularly monitor the level of occupancy and the level of cultivation at all allotment sites in Watford and does not fall below 80%, and ensure vacant plots are re-let within 4 weeks where a waiting list exists.	Veolia	Monitor monthly and ongoing S,M,L
1.2	To increase the number of plot provision to reflect the longer term minimum shortfall in supply across Watford by looking at the increased provision of smaller plots as they become available where appropriate	Veolia	Ongoing S,M,L
1.3	To ensure the proper procedures have been pursued in the event of any allotment sites becoming surplus to requirements.	Planning Legal	L
1.4	To ensure that all allotment sites meet the recommended quality standard and all are classed as high quality.	WBC	Ongoing S,M,L

Key Policy 2: To ensure the benefits of allotment gardening are extended to all sections of the Watford community so that there is more diversity in the take up of allotments.

Reference	Action	Who	Timescale
2.1	The regular updating of the website with links to appropriate allotment and gardening sites.	Veolia	S
2.2	Local promotional campaigns advertising the benefits of allotments focused on Doctors surgeries, libraries, community centres, leisure centres and health food shops where there are plots vacant. Develop an allotments poster.	Veolia WBC	Ongoing
2.3	Update the council website or have a web page on the WBC website dedicated to allotment gardening linked to complimentary sites such as the ARI, National Society of Allotment and Leisure Gardeners.	WBC	Ongoing
2.4	To develop partnerships with organisations such as the PCT, community groups, local schools, Herts County Council, Schools, WCH, BME and Youth Groups to broaden the appeal of allotment gardening	Veolia	M,L
2.5	To offer plots to non-residents within a 2-mile radius covering Bushey, Carpenders Park, South Oxhey, Croxley Green, Abbots Langley, and Brickett Wood and agree a rate for non-residents	Veolia	M,L
2.6	To adapt plot sizes to suit different needs, looking	Veolia	S,M,L



	at plot size, levels, access in relation to groups such as schools, youth clubs and groups and individuals with disabilities.		
2.7	To re-assess the role of site supervisors on WBC run sites to ensure that the allotment is being run properly and all tenants needs are being met. To ensure monthly reports are submitted from Supervisors.	Veolia	S,M,L
2.8	To look into the opportunities for appointing a dedicated allotments officer part time	WBC	S
2.9	To promote school use of sites & options available & support Healthy Schools Program	Veolia	M,L

Key Policy 3: To ensure allotments in Watford are managed and administered in the most effective and efficient way.

Reference	Action	Who	Timescale
3.1	To look into the opportunities for appointing a dedicated allotments officer part time	WBC	S
3.2	To have a formal procedure to annually review the administration of its allotment stock managed by Associations and WBC. This should include: occupancy levels, cultivation levels, waiting lists and a financial statement for the previous 12 months. To be reported at Allotments Forum	Veolia	L
3.3	To ensure that all sites encourage high levels of cultivation and follow policy and procedures for dealing with gardeners who rent plots but do not cultivate them.	Veolia	S,M,L
3.4	To review allotment charges annually	WBC	Ongoing
3.5	To consider the opportunities of capital and external funding	Veolia WBC	Ongoing
3.6	To review the Terms and Conditions annually	WBC	S
3.7	To ensure animals are kept on Watford Council allotments in line with RSPCA / NSALG animal welfare guidance by issuing guidance to all plot holders who wish to keep animals or livestock on plots.	Veolia	S
3.8	To manage and protect local biodiversity on sites and enhance where possible	Veolia WBC	S, M, L



Key Policy 4: To ensure that resources match the needs of the service.

Reference	Action	Who	Timescale
4.1	The Council to review every 2 years the process and principles by which the rent charges are arrived at by benchmarking with neighbouring authorities and within the Borough itself	WBC	L
4.2	To maximise grant opportunities as and when they arise	WBC	S,M,L

S – Short Term (12-18 months)

M – Medium Term (18-36 months)

L – Long Term (36 months +)





Part A

Report to: Cabinet

Date of meeting: Monday, 2 March 2020

Report author: Head of Parks, Heritage and Culture

Title: A Green Spaces Strategy for Watford - progress report

1.0 Summary

1.1 In 2013, the council adopted a new 10 year Green Spaces Strategy. The Action Plan proposed and adopted was challenging and as we approach the last 3 years of the strategy, it was felt that an update was due noting progress, successes, challenges for the future and suggestions for future priorities. This report highlights these for consideration by Cabinet.

1.2 There is now a need to consider the next stages of the strategic management of our valuable green spaces in light of wider planning policies and guidance.

2.0 Risks

2.1 No risks identified

3.0 Recommendations

3.1 To note the contents of the report

Further information:

Paul Rabbitts

paul.rabbitts@watford.gov.uk

Report approved by: Alan Gough, Group Head of Service, Community and Environmental Services

4.0 Detailed proposal

4.1 Watford adopted a new Green Spaces Strategy in November 2013 and this was a far reaching and challenging requirement for the council. A vision was adopted that stated:-

Watford will have a network of accessible, high quality and highly valued green spaces to be proud of, promoting sustainability, supporting bio-diversity and

extensively contributing to the economic, social and environmental aspirations of the town.

- 4.2 However, what is a Green Spaces Strategy and what is its purpose? It sets out how a local authority will invest in and manage the open space in its area. This is exactly what this 10 year strategy set out to do when it was adopted in 2013. It applied to all open space in Watford (excluding spaces within housing estates) and applied primarily to parks and open spaces, squares, play space, allotments and our natural green space assets, especially valuable in an urban community such as ours. It provided the evidence, set the direction and helped secure funds for continued investment in open space. In 2018, we re-assessed our Green Space priorities and re-visited our Action Plan to assess our achievements and our plans moving forward in an ever changing environment and further re-assessed this in late 2019 / early 2020.
- 4.3 Our 10 year strategy still remains ambitious despite continued challenging economic times that we all face and Watford is not alone in embracing these challenges head on. When it was written and adopted, it recognised and acknowledged the benefits of green spaces to Watford as a town as well as those that live, work and visit. As a town, we continue to grow and the last census indicated substantial growth in our population and changes in the demographic make-up of it. Involving communities is an important aspect of how we manage and provide green spaces and the strategy advocates strong community engagement, from children and young people, to minority groups across the town.
- 4.4 Ongoing research and changes in policy direction at a national level are recognised, in particular, the importance of the National Planning Policy Framework Guidance on open space, sports and recreation facilities, public rights of way and local green space and the importance of Green Infrastructure as set out in the 2016 guidance on the Natural environment, and more locally, our Corporate Plan to 2020, where our vision is to create a bold and progressive future for Watford. The important messages from these and others is that green spaces still matter and must deliver clear benefits for local people, wildlife and the long term sustainability of Watford.
- 4.5 The original evidence that was provided through a range of green spaces audits, where we assessed quality, quantity and accessibility through a comprehensive on site audit and analysis was subsequently mapped onto a Geographical Information System (GIS). These audits covered many issues such as maintenance, cleanliness, biodiversity, usage, recreational value, facilities available and management regimes. A tried and tested methodology, this gave us the evidence we needed to build up a picture, identifying what we have and allowing us to prioritise. We have reassessed these audits and updated them within the current strategy.

As a reminder, we assessed the quality and value of our green spaces, how good were they and what contribution they were making to local amenity, looking at a

range of typologies, which included parks, gardens and recreation grounds, allotments, play areas, natural green space, cemeteries and sports facilities. We categorised each space as to whether it was high or low quality or high or low community value. The updated results are summarised within the updated strategy but the overall result in 2013 was that the quality and value of open spaces across Watford was mixed, with some good examples such as the three Green Flag parks at that time and play areas in particular, reflected in the significant investment over the last few years. In 2019/20, the picture is very different, with most of our parks and open spaces now high quality and of high value. In 2019, the Council had obtained 12 Green Flag awards, compared to 3 in 2013.

- 4.6 There is still often a perception among residents that “there is never enough green space”, but when we assessed the amount of green space over the range of typologies, as a town, Watford is in fact very well endowed, and many of our wards have excellent provision of green space over a range of typologies. Some small deficiencies do still occur, especially with regards to natural green space, but overall, we are well provided for. However, accessibility is an issue for many and the strategy continues to advocate adopting green infrastructure principles and developing a strategic green space network for the town. By setting standards of provision we would expect to maintain in Watford, we can concentrate on those sites that are most important to us which need to be protected at all costs as well as continually enhanced. This allows the council to deliver change through improving the quality, value and accessibility of our green space network, making Watford a better place to live. The network proposed was formed of regional, community and local parks, along with a network of strategic sports hubs and green links with an emphasis on enhancement, accessibility, protection and increasing community and stakeholder involvement. This still remains the case in 2019/20.
- 4.7 But what about those sites which do not perform well and are deemed low quality and/or low value? Originally 50 sites fell into this category including some of our most important parks. There is a clear policy on how we treat these sites. We looked at enhancing the quality of many of these green spaces as long as it was possible to improve and enhance the value of them. If this was not possible, we would consider the space surplus to requirements in terms of its current use if the value cannot be improved and consider alternative uses. However, this must still be considered in the light of wider planning policies such as the need to determine other typology deficiencies in the area within distance thresholds, whether enhancement is realistic and determine community value by local consultation. In 2019/20, only 35 sites now fall into the category of low quality and low value with many of these outside council ownership. Significantly, none of our main parks, allotments or play areas now fall into this category.
- 4.8 The Council continues to set a challenging vision with a number of key components, based on stewardship, management, use and environmental protection. We identified that because we cannot do it all, we need to work in partnership with

local stakeholders. We currently do this in many of our green spaces and communities, but there are significant opportunities to develop further partnerships across Watford. This may range from community tidy ups in open spaces with a Friends group or a joint working arrangement with a major organisation such as Groundwork, Hertfordshire and Middlesex Wildlife Trust or the Heritage Lottery Fund.

Funding continues to be a significant issue, and we need to identify further ways we can make changes, particularly through income generation, or partnering, developing self-management options or by altering management and maintenance regimes.

- 4.9 How will we know if we are continuing to make a difference? We continue to see Green Flag as the key performance indicator and we are very proud of the increase from the 3 that we had originally to the 12 (2019 figures) that we now hold, but we want to build on this further and seek further Green Flags for Watford. These include Green Flags for Garston Park, King George V Playing Fields, Watford Heath with Oxhey Grange Playing Fields and Harebreaks Recreation Ground. We have reassessed the quality and value scores of every site to assess what progress has been made, and will continue to do so.
- 4.10 The point of any strategy is to get things done and the most important aspect of this is the Action Plan and we developed a comprehensive, challenging, yet stretched series of actions to ensure this strategy actually “gets things done”. We have refreshed this in 2019/20 and have updated what Action Plans have been achieved.
- 4.11 Progress over the last 7 years of the strategy has been excellent and Watford’s green spaces are well considered, much loved and the improvements are there to be seen. This updated Green Spaces Strategy, however, continues to provide a realistic, yet challenging target for continued improvement for the remaining 3 years.
- 4.12 Officers have now commenced discussions for the strategic direction of our green spaces for the future in light of changes to planning policy. As part of the development of the current Local Plan, new assessments will be required for our open spaces to meet future requirements and needs. These will follow Green Infrastructure principles and be based on a new Open Spaces Needs Assessment.

5.0 **Implications**

5.1 **Financial**

- 5.1.1 The Shared Director of Finance comments that any initiatives that are not currently contained in existing budgets will require growth bids as part of the budget process.

5.2 **Legal Issues** (Monitoring Officer)

5.2.1 The Group Head of Democracy and Governance comments that there are no legal implications in this report.

5.3 **Equalities, Human Rights and Data Protection**

5.3.1 Having had regard to the council's obligations under s149, it is considered that no EqIA is required as this is an update and progress report only and has no change of policy included.

Having had regard to the council's obligations under the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) 2018, it is considered that officers are not required to undertake a Data Processing Impact Assessment (DPIA) for this report.

5.4 **Staffing**

5.4.1 Not applicable

5.5 **Accommodation**

5.5.1 Not applicable

5.6 **Community Safety/Crime and Disorder**

5.6.1 Community safety considerations are important in all our parks and open spaces. Anti-social behaviour is tackled firmly and the role of Friends Groups assists hugely in identifying and reporting issues.

5.7 **Sustainability**

5.7.1 The adoption of a strategy to manage our green spaces adds to the Councils wider sustainability agenda and Climate Change Emergency. The importance of retaining, managing and increasing our tree cover is essential to this wider agenda as well as increasing the biodiversity of our green spaces.

Appendices

- Appendix A – Updated Green Spaces Strategy - Service Update 2020

Background papers

No papers were used in the preparation of this report.

A Green Spaces Strategy for Watford

Green Spaces Better Places

2013-2023



Service update 2020



Document Version Control

Author	Section Head for Parks, Open Spaces & Projects - Paul Rabbitts
Version number	V0.7
Document	Watford BC Green Spaces Strategy 2013-23 – Updated 2018
For internal /external publication	Both

Change History

Issue	Date	Comments
1	1/3/13	Issued to Planning / LP / P&OS
2	8/3/13	Executive Summary added
3	11/3/13	Issued to Cabinet 03/04/13
4	07/10/13	Issued to Cabinet 11/11/13 FINAL
5	21/10/13	Issued to PFH and approved for Cabinet
6	11/11/13	Approved at Cabinet
7	12/02/20	Revised and updated

A Green Spaces Vision for Watford

Watford will have a network of accessible, high quality and highly valued green spaces to be proud of, promoting sustainability, supporting bio-diversity and extensively contributing to the economic, social and environmental aspirations of the town.



Contents:

	Page:
Executive Summary & Update	
1.0 Introduction	3
1.1 The Purpose of this Green Spaces Strategy	3
1.2 The Watford Green Spaces Strategy 2007-2012 - A Review	3
1.3 The Aims and Objectives of the revised Watford Green Spaces Strategy	5
1.4 What will this Green Spaces Strategy Cover?	5
1.5 Benefits of Green Spaces	7
2.0 Background Research and Consultation - The Watford Context	9
2.1 Local Character and Area Profile	9
2.2 Watford Consultation	10
2.3 Involving Communities	10
2.4 Policy Context and Background	13
3.0 Our Methodology - Green Spaces Audits and Standards - Quality, Quantity and Accessibility	23
3.1 Identifying and Prioritising	23
3.2 Investment in Green Spaces	24
3.3 Value for Money vs Cost Recovery	24
3.4 Quality and Value Audits and Standards	24
4.0 Analysis of Findings - The Audit Results	27
4.1 The Audit Results	27
4.2 Quality Standards	33
4.3 Investment Priorities	34
4.4 Quantity Audits and Standards - Green Infrastructure	34
4.5 Accessibility Audits and Distance Thresholds	39
4.6 Accessibility Audit Findings	39
4.7 Setting, Developing and Applying Local Provision Standards	44
5.0 The Strategic and Local Green Space Network - Policies and Aspirations	53
5.1 Our Vision	53
5.2 Delivering Change	53
5.3 The Strategic Borough Wide Network	55
5.4 The Strategic Borough Wide Network Map	57
5.5 The Watford Provision Level	57
5.6 Opportunities and Sites for Review	57

6.0	Key Green Spaces Issues - Our Vision and Strategy	58
6.1	Introduction	58
6.2	The Vision for Watford's Green Spaces	58
6.3	Key Issues	61
6.4	Contributions to the Enhancement of Existing Provision	66
6.5	Performance Indicators - Measuring Progress	67
6.6	Site Classification by Use - Grounds Maintenance Implications	68
6.7	Sustainable Design and Development	69
6.8	Anti-Social Behaviour	69
7.0	Action Plan	71
7.1	Stewardship	72
7.2	Management	73
7.3	Use	76
7.4	Environmental Protection	83

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY & UPDATE

What is a Green Spaces Strategy? It sets out how a local authority will invest in and manage the open space in its area. This is exactly what this 10 year strategy set out to do when it was adopted in 2013. It applies to all open space in Watford (excluding spaces within housing estates) and applies primarily to parks and open spaces, squares, play space, allotments and our natural green space assets, especially valuable in an urban community such as ours. It provides the evidence, sets the direction and helps secure funds for continued investment in open space. In 2018, we re-assessed our Green Space priorities and re-visited our Action Plan to assess our achievements and our plans moving forward in an ever changing environment.

Our 10 year strategy remains ambitious despite continued challenging economic times that we all face and Watford is not alone in embracing these challenges head on. When it was written and adopted, it recognised and acknowledged the benefits of green spaces to Watford as a town as well as those that live, work and visit. As a town, we continue to grow and the last census indicated substantial growth in our population and changes in the demographic make-up of it. Involving communities is an important aspect of how we manage and provide green spaces and the strategy advocates strong community engagement, from children and young people, to minority groups across the town.

Ongoing research and changes in policy direction at a national level are recognised, in particular, the importance of the National Planning Policy Framework Guidance on open space, sports and recreation facilities, public rights of way and local green space and the importance of Green Infrastructure as set out in the 2016 guidance on the Natural environment, and more locally, our Corporate Plan to 2020, where our vision is *to create a bold and progressive future for Watford*. The important messages from these and others is that green spaces still matter and must deliver clear benefits for local people, wildlife and the long term sustainability of Watford.

The original evidence that was provided through a range of green spaces audits, where we assessed quality, quantity and accessibility through a comprehensive on site audit and analysis was subsequently mapped onto a Geographical Information System (GIS). These audits covered many issues such as maintenance, cleanliness, biodiversity, usage, recreational value, facilities available and management regimes. A tried and tested methodology, this gave us the evidence we needed to build up a picture, identifying what we have and allowing us to prioritise. We have reassessed these audits and updated them within the strategy.

As a reminder, we assessed the quality and value of our green spaces, how good were they and what contribution they were making to local amenity, looking at a range of typologies, which included parks, gardens and recreation grounds, allotments, play areas, natural green space, cemeteries and sports facilities. We categorised each space as to whether it was high or low quality or high or low community value. The updated results are summarised within the strategy but the overall result in 2013 was that the quality and value of open spaces across Watford was mixed, with some good examples such as the three Green Flag parks at that time and play areas in particular, reflected in the significant investment over the last few years. In 2019, the picture is very different, with most of our parks and open spaces now high quality and of high value. In 2019, the Council had obtained 12 Green Flag awards, compared to 3 in 2013.

There is still often a perception among residents that *“there is never enough green space”*, but when we assessed the amount of green space over the range of typologies, as a town, Watford is in fact very well endowed, and many of our wards have excellent provision of green space over a range of typologies. Some small deficiencies do still occur, especially with regards to natural green space, but overall, we are well provided for. However, accessibility is an issue for many and the strategy continues to advocate adopting green infrastructure principles and developing a strategic green space network for the town. By setting standards of provision we would expect to maintain in Watford, we can concentrate on those sites that are most important to us which need to be protected at all costs as well as continually enhanced. This allows the council to deliver change through improving the quality, value and accessibility of our green space network, making Watford a better place to live. The network proposed was formed of regional, community and local parks, along with a network of strategic sports hubs and green links with an emphasis on enhancement, accessibility, protection and increasing community and stakeholder involvement. This still remains the case in 2019.

But what about those sites which do not perform well and are deemed low quality and/or low value? Originally 50 sites fell into this category including some of our most important parks. There is a clear policy on how we treat these sites. We looked at enhancing the quality of many of these green spaces as long as it was possible to improve and enhance the value of them. If this was not possible, we would consider the space surplus to requirements in terms of its current use if the value cannot be improved and consider alternative uses. However, this must still be considered in the light of wider planning policies such as the need to determine other typology deficiencies in the area within distance thresholds, whether enhancement is realistic and determine community value by local consultation. In 2019, only 35 sites now fall into the category of low quality and low value with many of these outside council ownership. Significantly, none of our main parks, allotments or play areas fall into this category.

The Council continues to set a challenging vision with a number of key components, based on stewardship, management, use and environmental protection. We identified that because we cannot do it all, we need to work in partnership with local stakeholders. We currently do this in many of our green spaces and communities, but there are significant opportunities to develop further partnerships across Watford. This may range from community tidy ups in open spaces with a Friends group or a joint working arrangement with a major organisation such as Groundwork, Hertfordshire and Middlesex Wildlife Trust or the Heritage Lottery Fund.

Funding continues to be a significant issue, and we need to identify further ways we can make changes, particularly through income generation, or partnering, developing self-management options or by altering management and maintenance regimes.

How will we know if we are continuing to make a difference? We continue to see Green Flag as the key performance indicator and we are very proud of the increase from the 3 that we had originally to the 12 (2019 figures) that we now hold, but we want to build on this further and seek further Green Flags for Watford. These include Green Flags for Garston Park, King George V Playing Fields, Watford Heath with Oxhey Grange Playing Fields and Harebreaks Recreation Ground. We have reassessed the quality and value scores of every site to assess what progress has been made, and will continue to do so.

The point of any strategy is to get things done and the most important aspect of this is the Action Plan and we developed a comprehensive, challenging, yet stretched series of actions to ensure this strategy actually “*gets things done*”. We have refreshed this in 2019 and have updated what Action Plans have been achieved.

Progress over the first 5 years of the strategy has been excellent and Watford’s green spaces are well considered, much loved and the improvements are there to be seen. This updated Green Spaces Strategy, however, continues to provide a realistic, yet challenging target for continued improvement for the remaining 5 years.



Cheslyn House and Gardens

1 Introduction

Green spaces play a crucial role in enhancing the quality of life for local communities in Watford. They improve the appearance of the town, and provide for informal recreation, sport and play. This comprehensive and updated Green Spaces Strategy for 2013 -2023 and Action Plan aims to ensure that Watford continues to achieve an appropriate balance between quantity of provision, quality, and the enhancement of existing green spaces.

This updated and revised Green Spaces Strategy revisits what the Council aims to do, in conjunction with its partners, to ensure protection of green spaces and sustainable provision, management and maintenance to meet the needs of the Watford community, as well as visitors to the town. It provides a vision and sets directions, priorities and actions for the remaining years.

1.1 The Purpose of this Green Spaces Strategy

This Green Spaces Strategy offers a major opportunity to improve parks and green spaces. Government guidance emphasises the need for a more strategic approach to green space. The former CABE Space (now the Design Council) guidance originally identified the role of Green Spaces Strategies and these are still relevant today. These are to:

- ❑ Generate political and inter-departmental support for parks and green spaces and establish clear lines of responsibility;
- ❑ Develop a vision shared by politicians, officers, key partners, stakeholders and communities;
- ❑ Define the value and role of parks and green spaces in meeting corporate and community aims;
- ❑ Create a comprehensive policy framework for the protection, enhancement, accessibility and use of parks and green spaces;
- ❑ Make sure that green spaces enhance the quality and diversity of the environment, the life of local communities and promote civic pride and social inclusion;
- ❑ Ensure that the green space network meets the needs of local people, now and in the future;
- ❑ Provide a framework for resource allocation that maximises funding to support improvements from internal revenue budgets and external funding; and
- ❑ Create a framework for voluntary and community groups to participate in green space provision and management.

'Green Space Strategies - a good practice guide' CABE Space.

1.2 The Watford Green Spaces Strategy 2007-2012 - A Review

In 2007, Watford adopted its first Green Spaces Strategy with an aim 'to provide green spaces to be proud of, which will benefit the whole community, improving health, well-being and quality of life'. It identified a number of objectives and outlined an Action Plan that has achieved much but has also identified further work that needs 'carrying forward'. Successes included:

- Spatial mapping of Watford's green spaces, identifying areas of deficiency;
- Improved links to Friends Groups;

- Continued improvements to Woodside Playing Fields;
- Improvements to children’s playgrounds and youth facilities, including outdoor gyms and fitness trails;
- A successful Cassiobury Park Round 1 HLF bid in 2012;
- Charter for the Bereaved for the Cemeteries;
- Continued retention of Green Flag for Cassiobury Park, Woodside Playing Fields and Cheslyn House and Gardens;
- Review and updating of the Allotments Strategy in 2013;
- Self- Management of Cherry Tree allotments;
- Sports Facilities Study completed;
- Program of signage replacement for all parks; and
- Provision of dog bins reviewed.

Other improvements were introduced with the allocation of Section 106 funding in 2011 and included the following:

- Litter bin replacement across all parks and green spaces;
- £4.6 million improvement program to parks and play areas, including Oxhey Park, Callowland Recreation Ground, King George V Playing Fields, Vicarage Road Cemetery, North Watford Cemetery, Radlett Road Playing Fields, Waterfields Recreation Ground, Knutsford Playing Fields and North Watford Playing Fields;
- Colne River Project and continued support for the Trust for Conservation Volunteers (TCV);
- Sports Legacy Zone at Meriden Park; and
- New Multi Use Games Areas at Leavesden Green, Callowland Recreation Ground and Radlett Road Playing Fields.

As part of this current strategy, the 2007-12 Green Spaces Strategy and Action Plan was reviewed and outstanding and relevant actions were carried forward. The last few years have brought a number of significant challenges for local authorities as they respond to changing government requirements and expectations, as well as the substantial reduction in government funding. These continue and are exacerbated by the loss of the Government’s Revenue Support Grant with the Council having to find further efficiencies.

The Council continues to work hard to achieve savings and to minimise the impact on the council, the services we deliver, the local community and on its staff. However, we have had to take some very difficult decisions and know that there will be more to be made as we work through the announcement of our government funding for the next number of years.

As a result of these national reductions in funding, many local authorities have seen reductions in standards across parks and green spaces and this has also impacted in Watford. However, the Council remains committed to its continued green space vision for Watford underpinned by this revised Green Spaces Strategy, whilst recognising and facing the challenges that the Council, the town and local people now face.

1.3 The Aims and Objectives of the revised Watford Green Spaces Strategy

The aims and objectives for this updated Watford Green Spaces Strategy are;

- To provide and enhance the strategic network of accessible, high quality green space throughout Watford;
- To provide guidance for the effective planning and protection of open space, sport and recreational facilities which meet local needs by:
 - providing appropriate green space planning policies and standards which provide clarity and reasonable certainty for developers and landowners, which will be taken forward as part of the Core Strategy;
 - designating all open spaces identified within the strategic network as Local Green Space, thereby protecting them against development due to their importance to local communities;
 - promoting good green space design and management principles in all new and existing developments.
- To strengthen local community involvement and interest in Watford's green spaces by:
 - encouraging community participation in the design, management and care of their local green spaces;
 - promoting the value of green space as a major contributor to health and social well being, via its use for recreational, educational and sporting activities;
 - promoting awareness and understanding of the heritage of our green spaces;
 - ensuring green spaces are locally valued and well used community assets.
- To improve green spaces by:
 - ensuring green spaces are high quality and locally accessible, clean, attractive, well maintained, fit for purpose and safe;
 - improving the existing green spaces contribution to the landscape, biodiversity and cultural value of Watford;
 - providing a more sustainable and long term approach to green spaces management and maintenance, looking at income generation opportunities and in some cases, full cost recovery of services.

1.4 What will this Green Spaces Strategy Cover?

This Green Spaces Strategy covers the following types of accessible green space as listed below. Much of it is owned and managed by Watford Borough Council but some are also owned by other public bodies like the County Council / Police Crime Commissioner with others in private ownership such as Watford Community Housing. The following is based on the typology of open space specified in the former Planning Policy Guidance 17 (PPG17) and is a typology that the Council is continuing to work with.

■ Parks, Gardens and Recreation Grounds (PGRG)

These areas of land are normally enclosed, designed, managed and maintained as a public park or garden or recreation ground. Their primary purpose is to provide accessible, high quality opportunities for informal recreation and community events.

■ **Amenity Green Spaces (AGS)**

These are landscaped areas that are a visual amenity and/or have separate land uses e.g. major areas of grass within housing areas and business parks that are usable for informal recreation, social activities and informal play. Their primary purpose is to provide opportunities for informal recreation close to home or work, or to enhance the appearance of residential and other areas.

■ **Green Corridors (GC)**

These are green routes/linkages including river and canal corridors, major road verges and hedgerows connecting different areas within urban and rural areas and joining green spaces together. Their primary purpose is for walking, cycling or horse riding routes and for wildlife migration.

■ **Natural and Semi-Natural Green Spaces (NGS)**

These are areas of undeveloped or previously undeveloped land with residual natural habitats. Their primary purpose is for wildlife conservation, biodiversity and environmental education and awareness.

■ **Allotments and Community Gardens (ACG)**

Areas of land rented for growing vegetables, fruits or flowers. Their primary purpose is to provide opportunities for people to grow their own produce as part of the long-term promotion of sustainability, health and social inclusion.

■ **Churchyards and Cemeteries (CC)**

This category includes municipal cemeteries, churchyards and other burial grounds with legitimate public access. Their primary purpose is for burial of the dead and quiet contemplation, often linked to the promotion of wildlife conservation and biodiversity.

■ **Civic Space (CS)**

This includes squares and streets, predominantly of hard landscaping that provide a focus for pedestrian activity and civic or cultural events, and can make connections for people and for wildlife.

■ **Play Space for Children and Young People (CYP)**

This includes equipped play areas, ball courts, skateboard areas and multi-use games areas (MUGA) for children and young people. Where these are within larger parks and gardens or areas of amenity space they will be recorded as a subtype to the predominant type.

■ **Outdoor Sports Facilities (OSF)**

These are large and generally flat areas of grassland or specially designed surfaces used for designated sports e.g. playing fields, tennis courts and bowling greens – areas which can generally be booked and whose primary purpose is for playing of sport. Where these are within parks or large recreation grounds they will be recorded as a subtype to the predominant type.

■ **School Grounds/Playing Fields (EDUC)**

These are large areas of open space associated with primary and secondary schools and are generally flat areas of grassland with a combination of playing fields, play grounds, play facilities or other areas of sport such as tennis, cricket or football. Most are inaccessible to the public but several have multi-use purposes and are used by the public after school hours and at weekends.

The following green spaces are not covered unless they are accessible to and available for use by the public:

- ❑ Large back gardens; and
- ❑ Private historic gardens.

This Green Spaces Strategy however, recognises that these areas may contribute significant and wide ranging benefits as part of the broader green infrastructure of the town, and that in some cases, where they are accessible and available for public use, they provide opportunities that meet the requirements and definition of local green space.

1.5 Benefits of Green Spaces

Green spaces are widely accepted as offering lasting social, economic, cultural, educational, environmental, and health benefits and this was endorsed by detailed research carried out by the former CABA Space. This is summarised below.

1.5.1 Social Benefits and Opportunities

Perhaps the most obvious benefits and opportunities that green spaces provide for urban living are social – they create opportunities for people to do things, take part in events and activities or just to be.

- **Children’s Play** – children’s play is one of the main reasons for visiting open spaces. The importance of play for a child’s development is supported by a wide range of research and is now increasingly accepted by professionals as well as ordinary people. Despite the importance of play for a child’s development, there are some issues in the urban context that restrict the opportunities for play in the external environment for many children including parental anxiety about children’s safety to poor provision of play facilities;
- **Passive Recreation** – walking the dog, watching your children play, wildlife, people, looking at views, reading or resting or just meeting people. Research has shown the importance of passive recreation is far more important to individuals lives than active recreation and most parks and open space users will use an open space for passive use rather than sport or events;
- **Active Recreation** – organised sport, children’s play, music, and a range of events. Despite being the minority user of parks and open spaces, nationally it is estimated that up to 16% of park users will visit for active recreation alone and account for 7.5 million visitors each year;
- **Community Focus** – festivals, meeting people formally or informally. Research in recent years has confirmed the importance of parks and open spaces as a focus for the community, or as places for people to meet each other, both formally and informally. This may be through organised events which may increase the sense of community. However, it is not only large and formally organised events that are important to the community. Studies have shown that about one third of people entering parks do so on their own, one third with a friend and one third with a large group;
- **Cultural Focus** – different ethnic backgrounds have different requirements from open spaces. There may be approaches related to design and management of parks and open spaces that could be investigated that would encourage wider use of these areas by these groups;
- **Open Spaces as Educational Resources** – The benefits to children have included sensory perception, children’s behaviour, outdoor learning opportunities, different patterns of play.

1.5.2 Health Benefits and Opportunities

Research shows that contact with the natural world can benefit mental and physical health. Access to a quality green environment not only benefits health in preventative terms, but speeds recovery and plays a vital part in our mental well-being.

Physical inactivity has been estimated to cost the NHS about 2-3% of its total budget, according to Dr. William Bird medical advisor to the British Heart Foundation.

Keeping active greatly reduces the risk of dying from coronary heart disease, and of developing diabetes, hypertension, obesity and certain cancers and helps maintain health and independence in older adults.

1.5.3 Environmental Benefits and Opportunities

Our green spaces and street trees can ameliorate urban environments, making it feel more liveable by screening eyesores, reducing noise and absorbing harmful pollutants. They support diverse wildlife habitats in our town, connecting people with nature close to home, school or work. The environmental benefits of urban open spaces and adjacent countryside are there for all regardless of social class, creed, ethnic background or gender.

1.5.4 Wildlife - Opportunities for Habitats and Human Experience

Watford is a busy and active town and as a result there are significant pressures on wildlife and therefore habitats for wildlife are much more significant. Watford has a range of habitats including two river corridors, 5 Local Nature Reserves (LNR) as well as Whippendell Wood which is our only Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and also a number of County Wildlife Sites. Within these are many habitats and designated wildlife spaces across the town that are managed by the Council and its partners, including Hertfordshire and Middlesex Wildlife Trust (HMWT), Trust for Conservation Volunteers (TCV) and a number of Friends Groups such as the Friends of Cassiobury Park and Friends of Harebreaks Woods who continue to improve our sites for wildlife as well as accessibility, management and visitor potential.

1.5.5 Economic Value of Green Spaces

There has been significant research over recent years between the link of having high quality green spaces and benefits to economic vitality particularly by CABI Space and GreenSpace. It is recognised that a clean attractive green environment not only gives social, recreational and health benefits to our citizens but is a vital part of attracting investments.

“Environmental enhancement not only makes places more attractive and pleasant but green space initiatives can result in community strengthening and local economic stimulation as well as improvement to local environmental quality”

“Improving Urban Parks, Play Areas and Green Spaces” Former ODPM



North Watford Cemetery

2 Background Research and Consultation - The Watford Context

2.1 Local Character and Area Profile

Watford is an urban borough in South West Hertfordshire, on the edge of the East of England region to the north-west of London. It covers an area of 2,142 hectares (8.3 square miles), and is the only non-metropolitan borough wholly contained within the M25. However, about 20% of the Borough forms part of the Metropolitan Green Belt and this is supplemented by a variety of open spaces. The Rivers Colne and Gade and the Grand Union Canal give structure to the main open areas, which include the Colne Valley Linear Park/Watling Chase Community Forest and Cassiobury Park, a historic park with a Green Flag award, the national standard for quality parks and green spaces. The Borough has excellent transport links with direct mainline rail connections to London, Gatwick Airport, the Midlands and the North, Underground and Overground connections to London, its north-west suburbs and the rural Chilterns, community rail connections to St Albans, national coach services to Heathrow, Luton and Stansted airports, and convenient road connections via the M1, M25 and A41.

A long established urban centre, with a market charter dating to the 12th century, Watford expanded rapidly from its linear layout along the historic High Street during the nineteenth century with the coming of the railway line. Much of the character of the area is formed by the streets of terraced Victorian housing, which were followed by an extensive variety of planned housing estates during the twentieth century. These estates, along with their associated employment areas, reflect the styles of design that predominated at the time of their construction, with the resulting diversity of urban character visible across the Borough. Watford is the centre of a sub-region serving around 500,000 people, living within a 20 minute travelling time catchment. Known for traditional industries including printing, the town has successfully diversified into an attractive and popular regional shopping and business centre and a focus for culture and recreation.

As part of the London commuter belt, Watford is strongly influenced by London; and whilst this brings the benefits of a buoyant economy, it also brings significant environmental pressures such as high levels of traffic congestion, high house prices and, with limited land available for development, pressure on all land, including the green belt. Green space in Watford is also varied in type, form, pattern, character and design, and ranges from the historic parks of Cassiobury and Oxhey Park, to local recreation grounds, allotments, play areas, sports pitches and playing fields, to the significant areas of semi-natural green space along the river corridors and Whippendell Wood.

2.1.1 Demographic Background

The importance of demographic information is important as without it, it is not possible to determine whether we have enough open space or even too much and where these gaps may exist.

Watford currently (June 2016) has a population of 96,800. This is an increase of 21.4% compared to the figure of 79,726 from the 2001 Census.

Key Census Day statistics for Watford:

- ❑ Watford's population on Census Day 2011 was 90,301, of which 49.6% were male and 50.4% female; The last mid-year estimate of Watford's population (June 2016), showed the population as 96,800 of which 49.5% were male and 50.5% female. Projections indicate that the borough is likely to reach a population of 100,000 over the next year.
- ❑ Watford has a high population density, which has risen to just under 46 people per hectare (up from 42 people per hectare 2011, compared with an average of just under 7 persons per hectare in Hertfordshire and just over 4 persons per hectare in England overall
- ❑ The non-white British proportion of Watford's population increased from 25% in 2001 to 38% in 2011. This is significantly higher than the national level of 20% and the Eastern region level of 15% and reflects Watford's broad mix of cultures. Significantly, the Asian population in Watford has increased from 8.2% in 2001 to 17.9% in 2011
Voted 9th happiest place to live in the country

Source: Census © Crown Copyright (KS02).

2.2 Watford Consultation

As part of the development of this Green Spaces Strategy, some early, but limited consultation was carried out and is discussed further in the following section under “Involving Communities”.

Research in recent years by a range of investigators, in particular English Heritage, GreenSpace, Natural England, the former CABE Space, and Comedia Demos (*‘Park Life’* report) has confirmed the importance of parks and open spaces as a focus for the community, or as a place for people to meet each other, both formally and informally. This may be through organised events which can increase the sense of community.

However, it is not only large and formally organised events that are important to the community. National studies have shown that about one third of people entering parks do so on their own, one third with a friend and one third with a large group. Different ethnic groups have also been identified as having different approaches to active and passive recreation.

Considering many of these issues, it is important to “involve communities” and define green space stakeholders in developing any strategic overview for the development, management and maintenance of green spaces in Watford. A report by the Heritage Lottery Fund in 2016 also highlights the popularity of parks with over 2.6 billion visits per year to public parks. Over 70% of park managers have recorded increased visitor numbers to their principal parks between 2013 and 2014. Yet 86% of park managers report cuts to revenue budgets since 2010 and they expect the trend to continue for the next few years. Just as worrying is that 71% of households with children under 10 years of age are concerned that reductions in council budgets could have a negative impact on the condition of their local park. The involvement of local communities has therefore never been more important.

2.3 Involving Communities

2.3.1 Green Spaces Stakeholders

Stakeholders are people who have an interest, so when we talk about green spaces, this potentially means everyone. They may use them passively (walking through them on their way to work, school or the shops), or actively (playing sport, visiting a facility there, or an event, or walking the dog), or live or work next to a green space. Green space impacts on most of us. We carried out some initial consultation as part of the strategy development but recognise that ongoing work with the Green Spaces Strategy will require continuing and ongoing consultation.

Taking into account local views is fundamental to achieving a successful green space network that people are satisfied with and feel safe using.

The local community was therefore engaged through the following methods:

1. Friends Groups, Sports Clubs and Residents Associations through *Survey Monkey*;
2. Members;
3. Citizens Panel consultation;
4. Project based consultation;
5. Annual Parks Forum; and
6. Annual Allotments Forum.

Table 2.3 – Summary of Early Consultation Issues (opposite)

Key Questions

A simple questionnaire was devised that was seeking local people's views on their local green spaces and in Watford as a whole. This included specific questions on quality, accessibility and quantity of open space. Questions were also asked in relation to the kind of activities local people engaged in green spaces.

Feedback (based on 164 responses)

- The most popular activity is walking with 92% of respondents taking part in it regularly, followed by 71% meeting friends, 37% observing wildlife, and 32% cycling.

Quality

- Within their **local areas**, 43% felt allotments were good to very good with only 12% saying they were poor or very poor; 83% said children's play areas were good to very good; 89% said that parks were good to very good and 73% said that recreation grounds were good to very good.
- 79% of respondents replied that woodlands and natural green spaces were good to very good.
- Facilities in open spaces was variable, with sports pitches (56%) good to very good but youth facilities, tennis courts and changing facilities poor to very poor.

- Within **Watford as a whole**, 49% felt allotments were good to very good, with 12% poor to very poor. 79% said children's play areas were good to very good, 94% said that parks were good to very good; 74% felt that recreations grounds were good to very good; 84% also said that woodlands and natural green spaces were good to very good. In relation to facilities, the results reflected the local areas results.

Quantity

In relation to quantity of green spaces in their local areas, most respondents felt that there were enough allotments, play areas, parks and recreation grounds, but many felt that there was not enough woodlands or natural green spaces. Youth facilities were significantly lacking in most respondents views. These responses were echoed within Watford as a whole.

Accessibility

A question was asked in relation as to how long a user would be willing to walk to certain green spaces facilities. Most allotment tenants were prepared to spend up to 10 minutes (44%) and 20 minutes (20%). Children's play areas were primarily within 10 minutes (42%), natural green spaces up to 20 minutes (49%); a local park within 10 minutes (55%); Recreation ground, between 10 and 20 minutes (70%).

Comments

Many comments were made in relation to green spaces ranging from the love of Cassiobury Park to the perceived development threats on open spaces and the high quality of children's play areas.

Key Issues

- Quality of green spaces is high especially parks and children's play areas;
- Quality of changing facilities, some sports and youth facilities is variable;
- Quantity of most green spaces is about right although youth facilities are an issue along with natural green spaces.
- Most users were prepared to walk between 10 and 20 minutes to a local green space depending on the typology.

2.3.2 Consultation with Young People

In 2011, 40% of Watford's population is made up of young people up to the age of 29, with just less than 20% under the age of 15. They are a difficult group to involve in decision making, design and management of the green spaces they use. There have been successes to date and developments continue in relation to involving young people. However more work is required to ensure the Council fully engages with young people. Their needs depend on age and level of parental dependency. Young children need access to safe green spaces closer to home though older children want to play alone or meet friends but still be relatively close to home. Older teenagers will travel quite independently within their own or an adjacent neighbourhood or simply "hang out" and be well away from other residents to avoid potential conflict.

Also, a previous study by the Heritage Lottery Fund shows that 86% of parents with children aged 11 or under, say that on a warm day their children would rather go to the park than sit watching a television program. The consultation highlighted a lack of facilities for young people in relation to teenagers.

2.3.3 Consultation with Ethnic Minority Groups

The 2011 census identifies that approximately 21% of the population in Watford comes from black and ethnic minority groups and is increasing with the remainder primarily white British. People from ethnic minority backgrounds face a variety of problems when accessing services. These may be through cultural differences, accessibility issues, as well as language barriers or fear of prejudice or harassment (real and perceived). An Action Plan will be developed that will look at how increased usage of open spaces by BME groups can be delivered with reference to the Black Environment Network Research, *'Ethnic Communities and Green Spaces – Guidance for Green Space Managers'*.

2.3.4 Improving Access for All - The Health of our Population

The NHS Health Profile 2012 for Watford, similarly to 2011, indicates that priorities include physical activity and obesity, particularly among younger people and older people's health.

The amount of physically active adults has improved again since last year (8.8% in 2010, 10% in 2011, and 10.5% in 2012) and is not far from the England average (11.2%). The amount of healthy eating adults has remained the same at 32.2%, better than the national average of 28.7%, as has the proportion of obese adults at 17.3%, below the England average of 24.2% but the percentage of obese children in Year 6 has again increased both in Watford (from 16.4% to 18%) and in England (18.7% to 19%).

In the council's original Corporate Plan 2012-16, the first objective was to 'Improve the health of the town and enhance its heritage'. Many Watford residents are already enjoying the benefits of the modernised leisure centres, Woodside and Watford Central, illustrated by Watford being ranked first in the country in 'satisfaction with sport and leisure facilities' in the Place Survey 2008-09. Ensuring that our leisure centres and our parks and open spaces are maintained to a high standard all contributes to a potentially healthier town.

However, it is recognised that we still need to increase participation in sports and leisure activities amongst our community as this has a positive impact on issues such as obesity, diabetes and heart disease. There is also a link in the council's other aims, for example, tackling problems such as alcohol and drug abuse has a positive impact on health as well as crime levels.

2.3.5 Consultation with Older People

As previously noted, nearly 17% of the population are over pension-able age. Older people are a diverse and expanding group and regular users of parks and green spaces for activities such as walking dogs, relaxing or taking grandchildren to play. They are also often the ones who are most likely to fill in a questionnaire or form a Friend's Group!

2.3.6 "Friend's in Green Spaces"

Watford currently has a number of Friends Groups across the town but also has a number of Residents Associations who are involved in enhancing their local communities. The Council and its partner, Veolia, are keen

to support these groups in relation to specific open spaces and local communities. Friend's Groups and Residents Associations are very important to parks and open spaces within the town's communities, as they have one common goal – to improve their local community green space. They create an important focus for the community and many successful partnerships have developed in areas where the “park” is at the heart of their community.

The support from Watford Council and Veolia is essential to ensure these groups are supported effectively. The work to support such groups will form part of an Action Plan of this Green Spaces Strategy and part of a wider Veolia initiative called 'Friends in Green Spaces' (FIGS).

2.3.7 Summary of Local Consultation

Any consultation exercise is always difficult to ensure as many views are taken into account as possible. The response for Watford was reasonable with over 150+ responses to the online survey. Several key issues have been highlighted as part of the consultation and were summarised above based on:-

- Local people's perception of the quantity of open space in Watford;
- Local people's perception of the quality of open space in Watford;
- Local people's perception on how accessible open space is in Watford;
- Time prepared to travel to different types of open space in Watford; and
- Current usage of open space

2.4 Policy Context and Background

The gathering of data that has been carried out in the development of this Green Spaces Strategy is important in setting local standards for the type, location, quantity, quality and accessibility of green spaces, helping to identify gaps in provision and to define key priorities for investment.

At a national level the key policy and guidance documents that underpin this strategy and set out clear expectations for local authorities to take a strategic approach to green space are:

- The Natural Environment White Paper (NEWP);
- The Biodiversity Strategy for England (BSE);
- The Localism Act, 2011;
- The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF);
- Making Space for Nature (MSN);
- Natural England's Green Infrastructure Guidance (GIG); and
- DEFRA's Green Infrastructure Partnership (GIP).

■ ***The Natural Environment White Paper (NEWP)***

The NEWP (2011) states the government's view that the quality of the natural environment is in decline, highly fragmented and unable to respond to the pressures that will follow from climate change.

The NEWP is based largely on the concept of “ecosystem services” and the benefits that society gains from natural resources and functional natural systems – benefits such as food and water, fertile soils and clean air. It concludes that many ecosystems are in decline and therefore the benefits society derives from them are also in decline. As a result it argues for the creation and maintenance of a “resilient ecological network across England”.

It aims to halt biodiversity loss by 2020; to support networks. It also refers to urban green infrastructure as completing “the links in our national ecological network” and “one of the most effective tools available to us in managing environmental risks such as flooding and heat waves”.

The White Paper introduced a number of new policy initiatives, including:

- ❑ Local Nature Partnerships, intended to work at a strategic scale for a better natural environment;
- ❑ Nature Improvement Areas intended to enhance and reconnect nature on a significant scale;
- ❑ Biodiversity offsets, designed to deliver biodiversity benefits for losses through compensatory habitat expansion or restoration elsewhere; and
- ❑ A Green Infrastructure (GI) Partnership designed to support the development of GI in England.

■ ***The Biodiversity Strategy for England (BSE)***

The BSE, Biodiversity 2020: A Strategy for England’s Wildlife and Ecosystem Services sets out how the Government intends to implement international and EU commitments. It aims to reduce the environmental pressures created by development by “taking a strategic approach to planning for nature” and by retaining “the protection and improvement of the natural environment as core objectives of the planning system”.

■ ***The Localism Act, 2011***

The Localism Act sets out an ambitious aim of “taking power away from officials and putting it into the hands of those who know most about their neighbourhood – local people themselves”. It requires changes to strategic, local and neighbourhood level planning; the most significant for green space planning relate to the neighbourhood level as it empowers Parish Councils or Neighbourhood Forums to develop Neighbourhood Development Plans and Neighbourhood Development Orders.

■ ***The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)***

The NPPF (published March 2012) is a streamlined version of the former Planning Policy Guidance and Planning Policy Statements issued by the Government over the years. It starts from the premise that the purpose of planning is to achieve sustainable growth and therefore it has an economic role, a social role and an environmental role. In particular, the planning system should seek to deliver positive improvements in the quality of the built, natural and historic environment and people’s quality of life. In more detail, the government’s aims for the planning system are that it should help:

- ❑ Build a strong, competitive economy;
- ❑ Ensure the vitality of town centres;
- ❑ Support a prosperous rural economy;
- ❑ Promote sustainable transport;
- ❑ Support high quality communications infrastructure;
- ❑ Deliver a wide choice of high quality homes;
- ❑ Require good design;

- ❑ Promote healthy communities;
- ❑ Protect Green Belt land;
- ❑ Meet the challenge of climate change, flooding and coastal change;
- ❑ Conserve and enhance the natural environment;
- ❑ Conserve and enhance the historic environment; and
- ❑ Facilitate the sustainable use of minerals.

As a result, the NPPF is structured around these thirteen objectives. Those sections which set out policies for green space and green infrastructure are Section 8, *Promoting Healthy Communities*; Section 9, *Protecting Green Belt Land*; Section 10, *Meeting the Challenge of Climate Change, Flooding and Coastal Change*; and Section 11, *Conserving and Enhancing the Natural Environment*.

Promoting Healthy Communities

Open space is a vitally important component of sustainable development and is covered in the NPPF objective of Promoting Health Communities. It requires planning authorities:

- ❑ To create a shared vision with communities of the residential environment and facilities they wish to see;
- ❑ To deliver the social, recreational and cultural facilities and services the community needs;
- ❑ To base their planning policies on “robust and up to date assessments of the needs for open space, sports and recreation facilities and opportunities for new provision” ; in effect, what was known until recently as a “PPG17 assessment” or “green space strategy;”
- ❑ To protect and enhance public rights of way and access.

It provides highly specific guidance:

Existing open space, sports and recreational buildings and land, including playing fields, should not be built on unless:

- ❑ An assessment has been undertaken which has clearly shown the open space, buildings or land to be surplus to requirements; or
- ❑ The loss resulting from the proposed development would be replaced by equivalent or better provision in terms of quantity and quality in a suitable location; or
- ❑ The development is for alternative sports and recreational provision, the needs for which clearly outweigh the loss.

Protecting Green Belt Land

The NPPF states unequivocally that “the fundamental aim of Green Belt policy is to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open” and requires planning authorities to:-

“... plan positively to enhance the beneficial use of the Green Belt, such as looking for opportunities to provide access; to provide opportunities for outdoor sport and recreation; to retain and enhance landscapes, visual amenity and biodiversity; or to improve damaged and derelict land”.

It also states that the construction of buildings in the Green Belt is inappropriate, although it also highlights a number of exceptions to this general rule. They include the

“... provision of appropriate facilities for outdoor sports, outdoor recreation and for cemeteries, as long as it preserves the openness of the Green Belt and does not conflict with the purposes of providing land within it”.

Conserving and Enhancing the Natural Environment

The NPPF suggests that the planning system should help conserve and enhance the natural environment by:

- ❑ Protecting and enhancing valued landscapes, geological conservation interests and soils;
- ❑ Recognising the wider benefits of ecosystem services;
- ❑ Minimising impacts on biodiversity and providing net gains in biodiversity where possible, contributing to the Government’s commitment to halt the overall decline in biodiversity, including by establishing coherent ecological networks that are more resilient to current and future pressures;
- ❑ Preventing both new and existing development from contributing to or being put at unacceptable risk from, or being adversely affected by unacceptable levels of soil, air, water or noise pollution or land instability; and
- ❑ Remediating and mitigating despoiled, degraded, derelict, contaminated and unstable land, where appropriate.

Provision Standards

The Framework entitled “Using a proportionate evidence base”, requires that planning authorities

“... set out their policy on local standards in the Local Plan ...they should assess the likely cumulative impacts on development in the area of all existing and proposed local standards, supplementary planning documents and policies that support the development plan, when added to nationally required standards.”

Implicitly, therefore, the NPPF continues the approach set out in the former PPG17 of requiring councils to adopt locally-determined standards for open space, sport and recreation provision, a key outcome of this revised Green Spaces Strategy.

■ **Making Space for Nature (MSN)**

MSN also highlights the decline in biodiversity and fragmentation of wildlife habitats, resulting in a reduction in the benefits that ecosystems deliver. It suggests that the overall aim for England’s ecological networks should be to ensure that

“Compared to the situation in 2000, biodiversity is enhanced and the diversity, functioning and resilience of ecosystems re-established in a network of spaces for nature that can sustain these levels into the future, even given continuing environmental change and human pressures.”

■ *Natural England's Green Infrastructure Guidance (GIG)*

Natural England has been promoting the concept of green infrastructure (GI) for some years. However, its initial attempts concentrated on trying to persuade local authorities to adopt its Accessible Natural Greenspace Standard (ANGSt) which set out an aspiration that everyone should be able to access a range of green spaces of different sizes within fixed maximum distances from their home. ANGSt had two main failings. First, it ignored the requirement in the former PPG17 that provision standards for open space should be locally determined; and second, it was simply unachievable in many areas. GI thinking has now moved on to focus more on the planned use of natural systems and processes (ecosystems) than what was ultimately an arbitrarily determined set of standards.

■ *DEFRA's Green Infrastructure Partnership (GIP)*

This is reflected in the work of the Green Infrastructure Partnership, which fulfils a commitment in the Natural Environment Green Paper, it brings together a wide range of organisations with a remit of:

- ❑ Finding ways to provide green infrastructure in towns, cities and rural areas;
- ❑ Address barriers that might prevent this progress;
- ❑ Develop and evidence base on the condition of England's green infrastructure and how it meets the needs of communities;
- ❑ Demonstrate the many benefits that green infrastructure can bring;
- ❑ Look into how communities, planners and decision-makers can best be supported in designing and developing green infrastructure; and
- ❑ Help people to quantify the costs and benefits of investing in green infrastructure and make the case for green infrastructure projects.

The Partnership defines GI as “a planned network of green spaces and other environmental features including street trees, gardens, green roofs, community forests, parks, rivers, canals and wetlands”. It has gone on to commission research on six broad topics:

- ❑ How to design and retrofit GI;
- ❑ How to plan GI for ecosystem services;
- ❑ How to work with communities;
- ❑ How to implement GI at the local level;
- ❑ How to value and make the case for GI; and
- ❑ How to ensure that people have the skills and knowledge to deliver improved GI

There are also a number of key local policy documents that are relevant to the Green Spaces Strategy. These are below:

■ *‘Watford Borough Council’s Corporate Plan to 2020’*

The Council’s Vision - To create a bold and progressive future for Watford

Our vision reflects our approach to the current challenges and opportunities facing the Council as an organisation and the town as a place to live, work, visit and study. We want to champion our town so that it is a place where all our communities thrive and prosper, benefitting from strong economic growth and good quality local services and facilities. This will require the Council to be innovative, explore new ways of working and champion initiatives that will transform the town and the organisation. More of the same isn’t going to secure the future we want for Watford, which is why bold and progressive lie at the heart of our ambitions.

Supporting this vision, the Council has 5 priority areas of work. Our priorities are critical to the Council achieving successful outcomes for its ambitions for the town.

1. Identify ways to manage the borough’s housing needs
2. Champion smart growth and economic prosperity
3. Provide for our vulnerable and disadvantaged communities
4. Deliver a digital Watford to empower our community
5. Secure our own financial future

In addition, our core, day to day business underpins everything we do and all of our work and effort contribute to our success. In particular, we recognise the importance of 3 key areas in making us an effective organisation, in touch with our residents and delivering in the areas and in a way that they expect. These are:

- **Effective two-way engagement and communication**
- **Sound management and high performance**
- **Improving the town’s environment.**

Listening to local people and ensuring they have the opportunities to influence decisions is essential if we are to focus on what matters most to our communities. We are committed to understanding needs and ensuring everyone has an opportunity to have a say.

Through ongoing consultations and engagement our community has told us what is important to them and the town. This has been reflected in our new corporate priorities but it also influences the work we do to deliver these priorities.

In our Community Survey 2012 we asked local people what they thought was important in making somewhere a good place to live. Below are the top five responses and how they link to our new corporate priorities.

TOP FIVE THINGS THAT PEOPLE SAY HELP MAKE THEIR AREA A GOOD PLACE TO LIVE	% response
Level of crime / community safety	72%
Quality of health services	46%
Litter / dirt in the streets	44%
Parks and open spaces	39%
Road and pavement repairs	38%

■ **‘Core Strategy’**

The Core Strategy sets out the overall vision, strategy and strategic objectives for Watford to 2031, and beyond, including the broad locations in which new development will be accommodated. It also sets out the broad framework for the other documents in the Local Development Framework (LDF), and has to be consistent with other strategies including Watford’s Sustainable Community Strategy. Underpinning policies related to green spaces is the Council’s commitment to Green Infrastructure with a range of priorities identified. The council will seek a net gain in the quality and quantity of Green Infrastructure, as well as recognising the benefits of green infrastructure already present and seeking to enhance and improve it.

Any proposals should improve links between sites and not compromise the integrity of the Green Infrastructure network by causing fragmentation, damage to, or isolation of GI assets.

Priorities for Green Infrastructure focus on the projects identified in the Watford Green Infrastructure Plan:

1. Cassiobury Park Enhancement;
2. Whippendell Wood Enhancement;
3. Grand Union Canal Enhancement;
4. Colne Valley Wetland Enhancement;
5. Urban Greening and Legibility for Watford; and
6. Joint working on the Green Herts interactive map

The contribution a development makes to the Green Infrastructure network will be a key consideration when determining planning permission, new development should contribute to the delivery of new Green Infrastructure and the management of a linked network of enhanced open spaces and corridors. In some instances an improvement in the overall quality of Green Infrastructure may make it acceptable for minor open space loss, this will be examined on a case-by-case basis.

The Green Spaces Strategy is relevant to a number of other key Council strategies:

It is important to determine where the Green Spaces Strategy sits within the hierarchy and what the links are. These are especially important when determining local priorities and especially when looking at allocation of available funding. The Green Spaces Strategy is central to the delivery of many of these policies objectives, including health, the economy, quality of life and economic regeneration. A structure is developed below indicating the hierarchy.

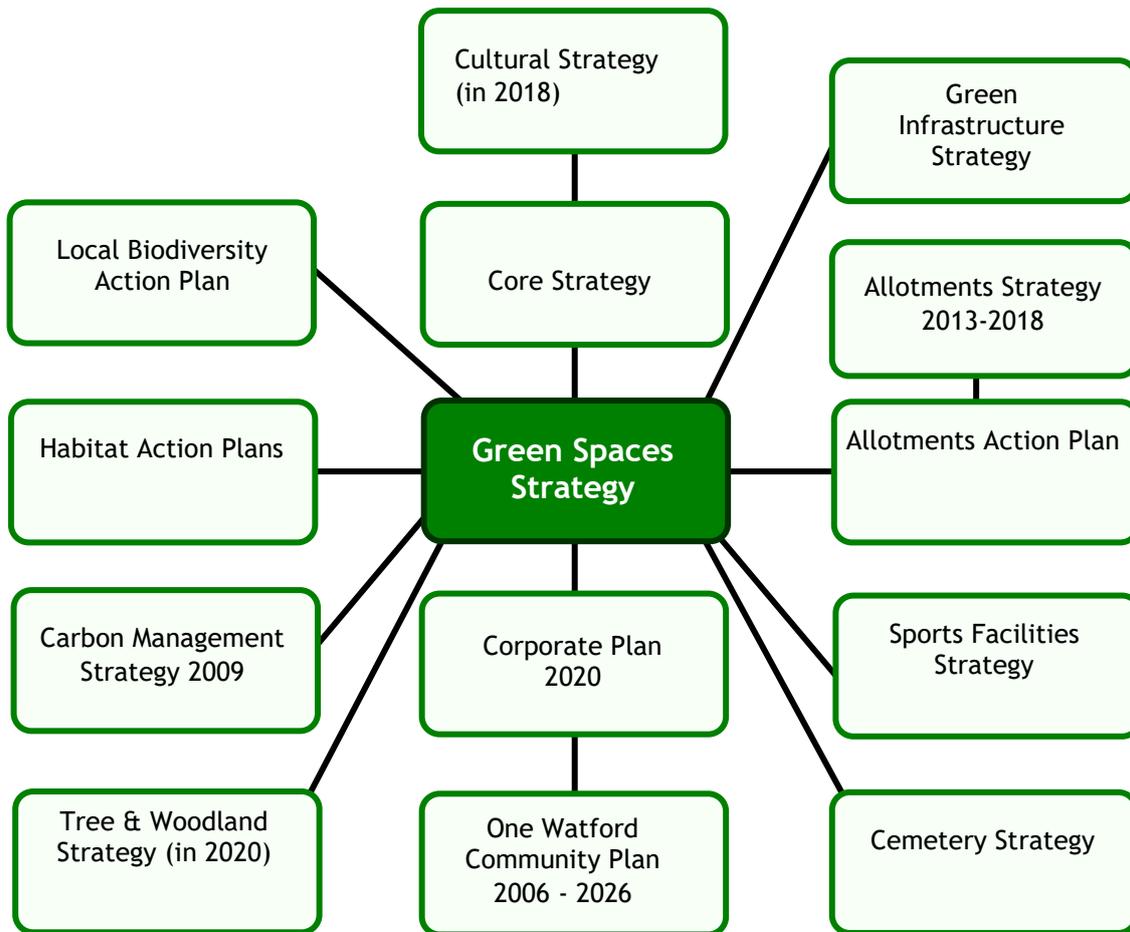


Figure 2.4 - Strategic Relationships

Importantly however, the key messages derived from the policy review are:

- Green space has risen up the national policy priorities in recent years and continues to do so with a recent Parliamentary Public Inquiry concluded in 2016. There has certainly been a change in emphasis from “quantity” to “quality and accessibility” and from “Sport and Open Space” to “Open Space and Physical Activity”;
- Treat green spaces as infrastructure that can deliver clear benefits for local people, wildlife and the long term sustainability of the Borough in a cost-effective manner;
- Take full account of the opportunities created by the NPPF to rationalise and improve provision, if necessary disposing of some poorly located and used spaces to fund the improvement of others;
- Set out clear requirements for developers providing on-site green spaces and how the Council will seek to use the Community Infrastructure Levy to fund new or enhanced green space provision or improve the wider Green Infrastructure network;
- Seek to harness and promote the use of ecosystems to make the Borough and neighbouring authorities more sustainable and deliver significant benefits to the local quality of life;
- As a general principle, seek to enhance biodiversity across the Borough wherever possible;
- A Green Spaces strategy should be “cross-council” and embrace the public health agenda;
- There are wider links to issues like sustainability;

- There is a need to raise the profile of the importance of the quality of Green Spaces in the wider planning process and to highlight its benefits;
- It is important that in developing an Green Spaces Strategy, that in terms of setting a wider framework for the strategy, the links to existing policies and strategies are determined, in particular the important ones highlighted in the policy hierarchy; and
- Green spaces priorities, standards and recommendations need to be **realistic** and **achievable** in an environment of diminishing resources, continuing economic challenges, and with the continued growth of the town, where there is increasing pressure on existing green spaces.



Woodside Playing Fields (above and opposite)



3 Our Methodology - Green Space Audits and Standards - Quality, Quantity and Accessibility

Part of the process of developing this strategy, audits of the quality and value, and the quantity and accessibility of green spaces were initially carried out across Watford in line with the advice in *PPG17* in 2010 (Quantity and Accessibility) and 2012 (Quality and Value). Without a comprehensive audit, we would be unable to set new standards or determine exactly what we had or how accessible it was. In doing this, we used standardised audit forms and GIS analysis to undertake these audits. This process has initiated the development of appropriate local provision standards. These audits covered many issues including:

- Maintenance and Cleanliness;
- Health and Safety;
- Biodiversity;
- Facilities and Management;
- Usage and Recreational value; and
- Negative factors impacting on the green space.

For the purpose of this updated Green Spaces Strategy, in 2017 and 2018, all audits were re-assessed after site visits with a combination of primary and secondary data. In the first instance, a desk-top review of all open spaces was re-undertaken identifying all parcels of open land from existing sources – parks management and maintenance plans, GIS (Geographical Information Systems) and aerial photography and secondly, all open spaces were re-audited including those managed by organisations other than Watford Council, thus enabling a more accurate and up to date assessment of the current provision of open space within the borough.

These sites were then updated using GIS linked to an Excel database. Having reaffirmed the area of open space in the Borough, the next stage was to undertake a more detailed assessment of each open space, looking at its quality and provision for access.

The adequacy of open space provision has traditionally been assessed by comparing the area of open space to the total population within a given geographic area. A key issue is what would be an appropriate open space provision standard for an “urban” district such as Watford, given that it shares common characteristics with many London boroughs rather than other Hertfordshire Districts. This view was retained.

Analysis was re-undertaken on an individual typology basis as opposed to grouping similar types. This reflected different values placed on each typology.

To understand the adequacy of overall provision, the Council took a composite approach to setting open space provision standards. This conforms to the guidance set out in the former *PPG17* and the Companion Guide ‘Assessing Needs and Opportunities’¹ as well as taking into account other options including the application of national standards – for example the National Playing Fields Association (now Fields in Trust) guidance of 2.4 hectares (6 acres) per 1,000 population. The standard was developed to reflect the amount of land required for sports and play facilities for local communities and thus focused on green spaces that are fully accessible to the public and can be used for these purposes.

3.1 Identifying and Prioritising

There was early localised recognition that there needed to be continued improvements to parks and open spaces in Watford and this was identified as a major requirement as part of the early consultation. However, despite the enthusiasm to do so, these continued improvements could not all be brought about at once and action needed to be organised, prioritised, resourced and adequately funded. The quality and value audits are discussed later but it

¹ Note that *PPG17* is no longer Government policy but still provides useful information until further guidance has been issued

is important to acknowledge the importance of these in determining current and future policies on green spaces. With the help of the updated open space audit scores and a quality/value matrix that categorises spaces and places, it will be easier to identify key priorities for action that remain but where progress has also been made.

A comprehensive audit will therefore give:

- Clear guidance for protection linked to prescribed and identified sites;
- Give an indication of what progress has been made where investment has occurred;
- Give specific recommendations by area where there are opportunities to improve accessibility and quality of green spaces;
- Clear understanding through custodianship of the areas to be retained and protected;
- Criteria for sites that may lead to occasional disposal; and
- Determine what additional resources are required to build on existing good practice.

3.2 Investment in Green Spaces

Watford has invested in many parks and open spaces over the last 5 years, primarily as a result of significant Section 106 funding and capital investment brought about by this Green Spaces Strategy, and it continues to recognise the need to maintain open spaces across the town to a high standard. Capital investment is still required across a number of areas of open space in Watford, particularly in local parks infrastructure, outdoor sports facilities, cemeteries, teenage facilities and this is confirmed by the latest updated qualitative audit.

National Government through the NPPF continues to advise Local Government to undertake rigorous audits of parks and open spaces, and to use this as a basis for future investment. This must be linked to the Development Plan, Core Strategy and other regeneration and economic initiatives. A comprehensive audit allows priorities to be determined on the ground as the Council will have the base data detailing how well or poorly an open space is doing. It allows policies to be determined in relation to improvement, re-allocation or rationalisation. It also allows the Council to assist in allocating existing and future resources, whether through developer contributions or a funding provider. Specifically, the NPPF states:-

‘Planning policies should be based on robust and up-to-date assessments of the needs for open space, sports and recreation facilities and opportunities for new provision. The assessments should identify specific needs and quantitative or qualitative deficits or surpluses of open space, sports and recreational facilities in the local area. Information gained from the assessments should be used to determine what open space, sports and recreational provision is required’.

3.3 Value for Money vs Cost Recovery

One of the greatest assets from parks and open spaces is that they are freely available for everyone to use. However, development, management and maintenance costs are considerable, but in comparison to other leisure facilities, offer excellent value for money. The cost per visit per person to a public park nationally is less than 50p! Cost effective asset management is about getting the best out of available assets. Can the Council get more out of some of the town’s open spaces by extending the range of facilities on offer or even consider charging for certain facilities and covering costs of the service eg car parking in parks?

The Council also needs to look at space that is under-performing, and may be surplus to requirements (low in value), or too difficult to bring up to standards. If this is the case, the Council may need to seek alternative uses. Local provision standards help to assess whether an open space is surplus to requirements and this aspect of green space provision is explored further in the section that follows.

3.4 Quality and Value Audits and Standards

Essentially a quality and value audit has three purposes:

1. To ascertain the quality and value of each site through evaluating a range of features or characteristics as objectively and consistently as possible;
2. To identify the features or characteristics which result in some sites being of low quality or value, to provide a focus for improvements or enhancements; and
3. To identify those sites that the Council should protect from development; those that would benefit from improvement and enhancement or those that may benefit from consideration for alternative green space uses.

Although driven partly by the previous 'PPG17', the audit encompasses wider implications than land use planning and seeks to provide the basis for prioritising improvements in site management, long term development as well as maintenance.

For the purpose of this Strategy, green space has been classified based on the original 'PPG17' typology. In seeking to maximise consistency, the Kit Campbell Associates Report '*Rethinking Open Space*' recommended the use of standard forms, which were used in the Watford audit and re-audit in 2017.

Over 184 sites were originally audited in Watford in Autumn 2012, to record scores for the quality and value of a variety of site characteristics. All sites were re-audited in 2017 and 2018.

The scores provided a basis for comparing sites and also provided an overview of the present state of open space in Watford. As such, they have provided an identification of those spaces the Council should protect through the planning system and those that are still a priority for future enhancement. The matrix developed in Figure 3.4 shows how this was developed under previous 'PPG17' guidelines. Sites are ultimately classified as either high quality/value or low quality/value. The scores for each site are detailed in Section 4.1.

3.4.1 Definition of Quality and Value

It is also important to define what quality and value actually mean as part of any on site audit:-

Quality relates to the range of facilities or features on a site. The quality audit covers factors such as site accessibility, safety and security, management and maintenance and the presence of planting, trees, seats, and other facilities.

Value relates to the contribution the site makes to local amenity, recreation and well-being, bio-diversity, cultural heritage, community or other strategic objectives.

Sites were audited on the following basis using the 'PPG17' typology:

- Allotments and Community Gardens (ACG);
- Play space for Children and Young People (CYP);
- Teenage facilities (CYP);
- Multi-functional Green Spaces - covering local amenity green spaces (AGS), parks and gardens (PGRG), churchyards and cemeteries (CC), green corridors (GC), natural and semi-natural green spaces (NGS) and Outdoor Sports Facilities (OSF);

We have combined the quality and value audits of local amenity green spaces, parks and gardens, churchyards and cemeteries, natural and semi-natural green space, green corridors and outdoor sports facilities due to the multi-functionality of those open spaces, as well as much of the quality criteria is similar across each typology.

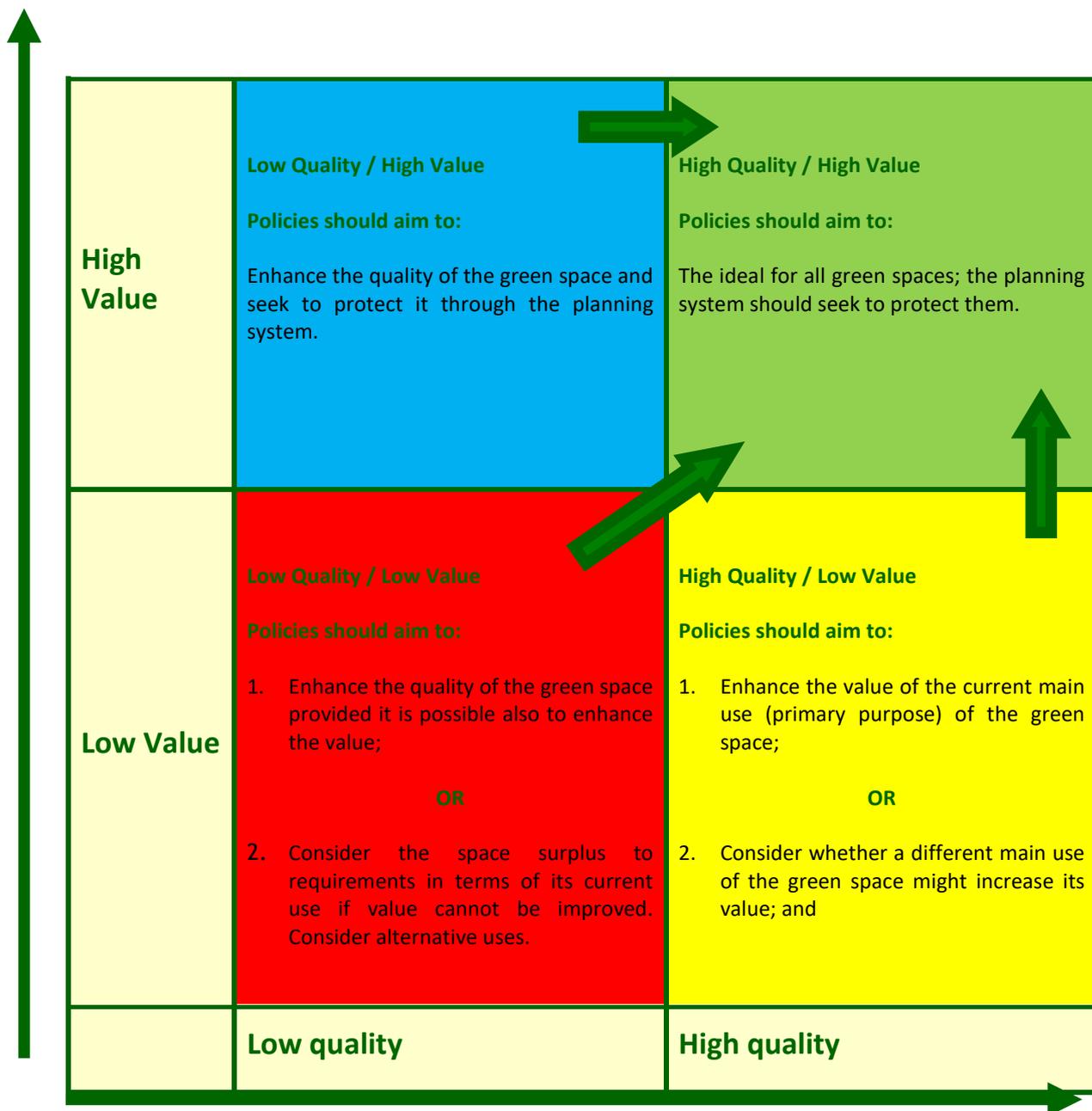


Figure 3.4 – Quality/Value Matrix, as summarised by CABE Space

The result from this work enables Watford Borough Council:

- To rank sites across Watford in terms of value or quality either in general or in relation to specific features or characteristics;
- To analyse the impact of investment in local green spaces and where spaces have improved or declined further;
- To identify priorities for investment and development or possible changes to management and maintenance practices;
- To identify the need for developer contributions to fund the enhancement of existing provision within the vicinity of a proposed development; and
- To enter the audit results into a GIS for mapping purposes.

4 Analysis of Findings - The Audit Results

4.1 The Audit Results

Full details of the **audit results** are too detailed to list within the scope of this strategy. However a **summary** follows in relation to the town and the overall scores are listed below in the table below.

NAME	TPOLOGY	QUALITY	VALUE	CATEGORY	STATUS
Amenity Green Space (AGS)	AGS	70%	66%	HQHV	
Harebreaks Estate South	AGS	81%	50%	HQLV	No change
Beechen Grove	AGS	73%	63%	HQLV	No change
Church Street	AGS	64%	55%	LQLV	No change
Watford Field Road	AGS	62%	71%	LQHV	No change
Raphael Drive	AGS	52%	50%	LQLV	No change
Holywell Estate	AGS	65%	54%	LQLV	No change
Croxley View	AGS	86%	96%	HQHV	No change
Berry Avenue	AGS	56%	29%	LQLV	No change
Harebreaks Estate Greenspace	AGS	75%	48%	HQLV	No change
Gisburne Way	AGS	79%	69%	HQHV	No change
Kytes Estate	AGS	71%	66%	HQHV	No change
Coates Dell	AGS	77%	77%	HQHV	No change
Gaddesden Crescent	AGS	72%	56%	HQLV	No change
Codicote Drive	AGS	60%	25%	LQLV	No change
Kimpton Place	AGS	68%	53%	LQLV	No change
The Gossamers	AGS	83%	72%	HQHV	No change
Meriden	AGS	72%	48%	HQLV	No change
The Meadows	AGS	32%	33%	LQLV	No change
Cow Lane	AGS	66%	47%	LQLV	No change
Russell House/Mulberry Close	AGS	87%	91%	HQHV	No change
Rufford Close	AGS	62%	71%	LQHV	No change
Lingfield Way	AGS	76%	83%	HQHV	No change
Nascot Grange	AGS	87%	84%	HQHV	No change
Grange Close	AGS	85%	66%	HQHV	No change
Willow Grange	AGS	74%	71%	HQHV	No change
Blackwell Drive	AGS	45%	63%	LQLV	No change
Longcroft	AGS	81%	68%	HQHV	No change
The Pastures	AGS	47%	70%	LQHV	No change
Watford Heath	AGS	79%	75%	HQHV	No change
Top of Cassio Road	AGS	35%	72%	LQHV	No change
Cassio Common	AGS	85%	80%	HQHV	No change
Hemming Way	AGS	53%	27%	LQLV	No change
Crown Rise	AGS	55%	20%	LQLV	No change
Douglas Avenue/Tudor Drive	AGS	82%	78%	HQHV	No change
Radlett Road/Bushey Mill Lane	AGS	75%	69%	HQHV	No change
Norbury Avenue	AGS	99%	60%	HQLV	No change
Reeds Crescent	AGS	93%	92%	HQHV	No change
Horseshoe Lane/Boundary Way	AGS	75%	76%	HQHV	No change
Cobb Green	AGS	52%	55%	LQLV	No change
Weall Green	AGS	85%	63%	HQLV	No change
Stud/Weall Green	AGS	54%	40%	LQLV	No change
Stud Green	AGS	65%	42%	LQLV	No change
Alban Wood School	AGS	67%	42%	LQLV	No change
Hope Green	AGS	85%	63%	HQLV	No change
Albans View	AGS	57%	55%	LQLV	No change
Valley Rise	AGS	65%	47%	LQLV	No change

Ganders Ash	AGS	69%	31%	LQLV	
Russell Crescent	AGS	67%	27%	LQLV	
Sherwoods Estate	AGS	79%	50%	HQLV	

NAME	TYPOLOGY	QUALITY	VALUE	CATEGORY	STATUS
Churchyards & Cemeteries (CC)		70%	66%	HQHV	
St Mary's Churchyard	CC	89%	89%	HQHV	Improved
North Watford Cemetery	CC	82%	73%	HQHV	Improved
Vicarage Road Cemetery	CC	63%	66%	LQHV	No change
All Saints Church	CC	63%	90%	LQHV	Declined

NAME	TYPOLOGY	QUALITY	VALUE	CATEGORY	STATUS
Green Corridors (GC)		70%	66%	HQHV	
Timberlake/River Colne GC	GC	84%	84%	HQHV	No change
Ebury Way	GC	70%	89%	HQHV	No change
Tolpits Lane to Ascot Road Cycle Route	GC	82%	80%	HQHV	No change
A41 Colne Way	GC	40%	73%	LQHV	No change
Mundon Drive North	GC	76%	78%	HQHV	No change
Hempstead Road North	GC	43%	46%	LQLV	No change
Hempstead Road South	GC	43%	46%	LQLV	No change
Grand Union Canal	GC	51%	73%	LQHV	No change
Mundon Drive South	GC	90%	96%	HQHV	No change

NAME	TYPOLOGY	QUALITY	VALUE	CATEGORY	STATUS
Allotment and Community Gardens (ACG)		70%	66%	HQHV	
Timberlake	ACG	91%	78%	HQHV	Improved
Holywell	ACG	87%	71%	HQHV	Improved
Brightwell	ACG	85%	67%	HQHV	Improved
Callowland	ACG	86%	71%	HQHV	Improved
Cherry Tree	ACG	95%	66%	HQHV	Improved
Wiggenhall	ACG	90%	27%	HQLV	Improved
Oxhey Grange	ACG	89%	74%	HQHV	Improved
Paddock Road	ACG	89%	77%	HQHV	Improved
Briar Road	ACG	94%	42%	HQLV	Improved
Tavistock Road	ACG	83%	43%	HQLV	Improved
Chester Road	ACG	86%	32%	HQLV	Improved
Garston Manor	ACG	90%	80%	HQHV	Improved



St Mary's Churchyard

NAME	TPOLOGY	QUALITY	VALUE	CATEGORY	STATUS
Natural Green Space (NGS)		50%	66%	HQHV	
Milton Street Railway	NGS	20%	66%	LQHV	No change
Stephenson Way Land Transfer Natural Area	NGS	17%	52%	LQLV	No change
Ascot Road Semi-natural Area	NGS	53%	74%	HQHV	No change
Tolpits Lane (former Scammell Site)	NGS	16%	43%	LQLV	No change
Lairage Land	NGS	40%	77%	LQHV	No change
Adjacent to Ebury Way and Lairage land	NGS	40%	77%	LQHV	No change
Caractacus View	NGS	40%	77%	LQHV	No change
Brightwells Farm	NGS	40%	77%	LQHV	No change
Tolpits Lane	NGS	22%	52%	LQLV	No change
Harebreaks Woodland	NGS	50%	66%	HQHV	No change
Tunnel Woods	NGS	51%	78%	HQHV	No change
Beechfield School Woodland	NGS	44%	79%	LQHV	No change
Sussex Road/Railway	NGS	30%	55%	LQLV	No change
Park Terrace Wood	NGS	50%	76%	HQHV	No change
Garston Park LNR	NGS	50%	78%	HQHV	No change
Three Valleys Water	NGS	35%	39%	LQLV	No change
Ravenscroft	NGS	60%	65%	HQLV	No change
Russel Lane Wood	NGS	23%	69%	LQHV	No change
Greenbank Wood	NGS	23%	69%	LQHV	No change
Nascot Wood School Woodland	NGS	53%	84%	HQHV	No change
Attenborough Fields	NGS	100%	98%	HQHV	No change
The Grove	NGS	75%	70%	HQHV	No change
The Spinney, Grovemill Lane	NGS	50%	60%	HQLV	No change
Whippendell Wood	NGS	75%	96%	HQHV	No change
Cassiobury Park LNR	NGS	89%	89%	HQHV	No change
Ash Close	NGS	45%	79%	LQHV	No change
Golf driving range woodland	NGS	67%	70%	HQHV	No change
Croxley Green Junction	NGS	37%	55%	LQLV	No change
Land off Riverside Road	NGS	24%	51%	LQLV	No change
Alban Wood	NGS	65%	84%	HQHV	No change
North Orbital Road adjacent to Leisure Park	NGS	56%	36%	HQLV	No change
A405 adjacent to Leverett Close	NGS	58%	38%	HQLV	No change



Goodwood Recreation Ground

NAME	TYPOLOGY	QUALITY	VALUE	CATEGORY	STATUS
Parks, Gardens, Recs Grounds (PGRG)		70%	66%	HQHV	
Buryfield Nature Garden	PGRG	44%	49%	LQLV	No change
Radlett Road Playing Fields	PGRG	73%	70%	HQHV	Improved
Waterfields Recreation Ground	PGRG	82%	85%	HQHV	Improved
Watford Fields Recreation ground	PGRG	70%	70%	HQHV	Improved
Oxhey Park Sports Ground	PGRG	46%	66%	LQHV	No change
Harwoods Recreation Ground	PGRG	89%	79%	HQHV	Improved
King George V Playing Field	PGRG	80%	79%	HQHV	Improved
Harebreaks Recreation Ground	PGRG	71%	81%	HQHV	Improved
Callowland Recreation Ground	PGRG	78%	75%	HQHV	Improved
Garston Park	PGRG	63%	71%	LQHV	Declined
Meriden Park	PGRG	76%	84%	HQHV	No change
Lea Farm Recreation Ground	PGRG	73%	67%	HQHV	Improved
Goodwood Recreation Ground	PGRG	75%	69%	HQHV	Improved
North Watford Playing Field	PGRG	81%	73%	HQHV	Improved
Cheslyn Gardens	PGRG	98%	100%	HQHV	No change
Riverside Road Recreation Ground	PGRG	70%	72%	HQHV	Improved
Oxhey Park	PGRG	91%	83%	HQHV	Improved
Oxhey Grange Playing Field	PGRG	73%	64%	HQLV	Improved
Oxhey Green	PGRG	90%	79%	HQHV	No change
Glen Way Recreation Ground	PGRG	80%	82%	HQHV	No change
Cassiobury Park	PGRG	92%	99%	HQHV	Improved
Leavesden Green	PGRG	58%	54%	LQLV	No change
Stanborough Park	PGRG	83%	87%	HQHV	No change
East Drive Recreation Ground	PGRG	66%	58%	HQLV	Improved
Knutsford Playing Fields	PGRG	70%	75%	HQHV	Improved
Riverside Park	PGRG	70%	75%	HQHV	Improved
Woodside Playing Fields	PGRG	93%	91%	HQHV	Improved
Hill Farm Recreation Ground	PGRG	52%	46%	LQLV	No change
Leavesden Park	PGRG	83%	71%	HQHV	No change



Cassiobury Park Hub

NAME	TYPOLOGY	QUALITY	VALUE	CATEGORY	STATUS
Children Young People's facilities (CYP)		70%	66%	HQHV	
Southwold Road	CYP	72%	52%	HQLV	Improved
Waterfields Recreation Ground	CYP	83%	83%	HQHV	Improved
St John's Road	CYP	80%	89%	HQHV	Improved
Estcourt Road Pocket Park	CYP	71%	21%	HQLV	No change
Central Primary School	CYP	85%	42%	HQLV	No change
Watford Fields Play Area	CYP	82%	71%	HQHV	Improved
Himalayan Way	CYP	72%	71%	HQHV	Improved
Harwoods Recreation Ground	CYP	90%	80%	HQHV	Improved
Stripling Way	CYP	73%	26%	HQLV	Improved
KGV Playing Fields	CYP	76%	80%	HQHV	Improved
Jellicoe Road	CYP	70%	72%	HQHV	Improved
Croxley View	CYP	90%	81%	HQHV	No change
Chiltern Pines	CYP	79%	68%	HQHV	No change
Courtlands Close	CYP	86%	68%	HQHV	No change
Berry Avenue	CYP	70%	70%	HQHV	Improved
Harebreaks Recreation Ground	CYP	79%	87%	HQHV	Improved
Foxhill (East Drive)	CYP	78%	84%	HQHV	Improved
Callowland Recreation Ground	CYP	78%	74%	HQHV	Improved
Leggatts Green	CYP	68%	51%	LQLV	No change
Garston Park	CYP	55%	78%	LQHV	Declined
Meriden Community centre	CYP	81%	66%	HQHV	Improved
Meriden Park Playground	CYP	85%	82%	HQHV	Improved
Lea Farm Recreation Ground	CYP	83%	72%	HQHV	Improved
Edward Amey Close	CYP	53%	57%	LQLV	No change
Gadswell Close	CYP	82%	47%	HQLV	No change
Goodwood Recreation Ground	CYP	83%	93%	HQHV	No change
North Watford Playing Field	CYP	84%	86%	HQHV	No change
Nascot Grange	CYP	74%	97%	HQHV	No change
Stamford Road	CYP	82%	89%	HQHV	No change
Riverside Recreation ground	CYP	75%	80%	HQHV	Improved
Oxhey Park	CYP	94%	87%	HQHV	No change
Oxhey Green Play area	CYP	88%	81%	HQHV	No change
Cassiobury park Upper	CYP	80%	95%	HQHV	Improved
Cassiobury Park Lower	CYP	91%	97%	HQHV	Improved
Leavesden Green	CYP	67%	75%	LQHV	Declined
Fern Way Recreation Ground	CYP	70%	82%	HQHV	Improved
Aspen Park Drive	CYP	74%	58%	HQLV	No change
East Drive Recreation Ground	CYP	80%	76%	HQHV	Improved
Knutsford Playing Field	CYP	90%	81%	HQHV	No change
Norbury Avenue	CYP	70%	67%	HQHV	No change
Chater School Play Area	CYP	81%	63%	HQLV	No change
Robin Place	CYP	69%	68%	LQHV	No change
Throstle Place	CYP	78%	68%	HQLV	No change
Magpie Place	CYP	60%	53%	LQLV	No change
Woodside	CYP	92%	89%	HQHV	No change
Hill Farm Recreation Ground	CYP	69%	64%	LQLV	No change
Ridghurst Avenue	CYP	79%	74%	HQHV	Improved
Radlett Road teen shelter	CYP	76%	21%	HQHV	No change
Derby Road Skatepark	CYP	73%	42%	HQHV	No change
Harwoods Recreation Ground teen shelter	CYP	53%	21%	LQHV	No change
Callowland Recreation Ground	CYP	83%	21%	HQHV	No change



Paddock Road Allotments

4.1.1 West Watford (Holywell, Vicarage, Oxhey)

The overall quality of open space in **West Watford** has improved across most typologies, especially parks, gardens and recreation grounds now scoring high in quality and high in value. Recent improvements to Oxhey Park and Riverside Rec have been significant. Children's play facilities score highly and reflect the recent investment across the town, as do allotments. The quality of natural green space is also high. Paddock Road allotments is now a Green Flag site.

As expected, the value of most green spaces to the local community is generally high, with key parks such as Oxhey Park (now Green Flag), Riverside Rec, Harwoods Rec and King George V Playing Fields all scoring highly. Vicarage Road Cemetery however as a significant local space in a dense urban area is deemed low quality but high value, and as an important open space, the reasons why need to be analysed further. It is a priority for improvement.

4.1.2 Central Watford (Central, Park, Nascot, Callowland)

The overall quality of green space in **Central Watford** is very good with some high quality open spaces across the full typology range, in particular Cassiobury Park (Green Flag), Whippendell Wood, as well as the recently improved open spaces at Waterfield Rec (Green Flag), North Watford Playing Fields (Green Flag) and Cheslyn House and Gardens (Green Flag). The quality of some open spaces has improved with recent investment and includes Callowland Recreation Ground (Green Flag) and Harebreaks Recreation Ground. Cassiobury Park provides comprehensive sports facilities as well as good play provision not just for Central Watford but for the whole town and has benefitted from nearly £7 million of investment. Likewise, Whippendell Wood, as the only SSSI in Watford provides important access to natural green space for the area and town as a whole.

4.1.3 North Watford (Tudor, Leggatts, Meriden, Stanborough, Woodside)

Open spaces in **North Watford** vary from high in quality and value with some very good sites, in particular Woodside Playing Fields (Green Flag) and Woodside Stadium, Stanborough Park, North Watford Cemetery (Green Flag) to those of lower quality and value, such as Leavesden Green and Lea Farm Recreation Ground. Allotments are generally of a high quality with an excellent site at Garston Manor.

4.2 Quality Standards

The Council has an aspiration that all of the principal spaces and facilities in Watford should be of both high quality and high value. The audit scores obviously provide comparative data on each site, but as stated, it is necessary to use an essentially arbitrary “cut off” point above which sites are classed as high quality or value and below which they are classed as low quality or value. This approach provides an initial method to assess the sites in a “broad brush” manner and underpin further policy assessments, based on the matrix shown in Figure 3.4.

The quality and value audits have detailed what the present levels of standards are in Watford and the re-audit shows whether sites have improved, remained the same or have declined.

These standards have two main uses:

1. They provide benchmarks for the Council to assess and compare the quality of different facilities of the same type within its area as an aid when determining priorities for improvement or changes to management regimes. Given that it will not be always be possible to achieve all aspects of the standards in relation to existing provision (for example because of limited resources) quality standards are an **aspiration**. As such they should be **challenging**, but broadly **achievable**, and the Council will aim to achieve them wherever practical.

Any assessment of the quality of nature of existing open spaces of sport and recreation facilities needs a clear set of benchmarks, related to stated standards and, ideally some form of scoring system. It is also an important opportunity for the “**parks management and grounds maintenance system**” and the “**planning system**” to work together. The aim should be to jointly identify those open spaces or facilities which need enhancement; the form this enhancement should take; and relative priorities;

2. They set out the Councils requirements as a guide for developers on the quality of provision the Council will expect them either to provide or fund. In this context, quality standards are a requirement, although they must obviously be applied in a way which is reasonable given the specific circumstances of a proposed development.

4.3 Investment Priorities

The quality audits carried out give a clear view of how to develop our priorities. These are further developed in Sections 5 and 6. An **investment plan** was drawn up based on the original audits with key details showing proposed timescales, targets and funding possibilities. This was delivered through the development of a **strategic green space hierarchy** which outlined the Council’s **key priorities** in regenerating its green spaces as well as identifying sites that need protection and those that could be disposed of. A new investment plan is proposed from 2019 onwards based on the likely available resources for the remaining duration of the Strategy.

4.4 Quantity Audits and Standards - Green Infrastructure

Green Infrastructure (GI) provides recreational support for communities and provides multiple benefits for the economy, the environment and people. Green spaces benefit the whole community, improving health, well-being and quality of life by providing areas for exercise, recreation, play and for visual relief in an urban area. Watford has experienced considerable population growth in recent years which is set to continue over the plan period. The council wants to ensure that the borough’s historic landscapes, open spaces (of both strategic and local significance) and major watercourses are protected as they are fundamental to the character and heritage of the borough and contribute to the resident’s quality of life.

Green Infrastructure in Watford refers to the networks of green spaces and natural features and includes open spaces, waterways, gardens, woodlands, green corridors, wildlife habitats, street trees and natural heritage. It provides landscape, wildlife, recreation and cultural experiences and can play a key role in adapting to and mitigating climate change.

‘Future Health: sustainable places for health and well-being’ published in Nov 2009 promotes the value of green infrastructure in the prevention of disease and the promotion of long-term health and mental well-being. Access to nature can reduce stress, improve mental well-being and relieve the sense of overcrowding in urban environments. Easily accessible green infrastructure allows people to make healthier choices. The report quoted:

- 91% of people believe public open spaces improve quality of life.
- The likelihood of residents being physically active increases 300% in residential areas with a high level of green infrastructure

DCLG Guidance on the Natural Environment, published in 2016 describes Green Infrastructure as a ‘network of parks, open spaces, playing fields, woodlands, but also street trees, allotments and private gardens’. It references that green infrastructure can also deliver a wide variety of planning policies including:

- Builds a strong and competitive economy
- Delivering a wide choice of high quality homes
- Requires good design
- Promotes healthy communities
- Meets the challenge of climate change, flooding and coastal change
- Conserves and enhances the natural environment

Watford contains **significant amounts of green infrastructure** for an urban authority and it is important that access to these key assets is maintained and improved. Improving access into strategic sites, such as the River Colne valley corridor and River Gade valley corridor/Grand Union Canal, in turn links into assets outside of the borough creating a wider green infrastructure network. It is important that biodiversity habitats are protected and the green links between them enhanced and protected from development.

There are 34 wildlife sites (including Local Nature Reserves LNR) in Watford covering 260Ha (Hertfordshire Biological Records Centre, November 2010), including Cassiobury Park LNR, Harebreaks Wood LNR, the Lairage Land LNR, Albans Wood LNR and Garston Park LNR all managed in whole or in part for their biodiversity and existing Local Nature Reserve (LNR) Status. The Council is also responsible for managing Whippendell Wood a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) on the borough boundary.

Where appropriate, planning proposals should incorporate green infrastructure, in line with local and neighbourhood plan policies and site specific considerations. As a component of sustainable development, green infrastructure should be considered at an early stage of a planning proposal. Depending on individual circumstances, planning obligations, conditions or the Community Infrastructure Levy may all be potential mechanisms for securing and funding green infrastructure.

4.4.1 Green Infrastructure Policy Objectives

The Core Strategy sets out objectives in line with this Green Spaces Strategy. The Council’s strategic objectives for Green Infrastructure are:

- Protect against the loss of all green infrastructure and biodiversity habitats within the borough;

- Enhance the borough's green infrastructure provision, either by making provision for new facilities in identified areas of deficiency based on the council's most up-to-date Open Space Study, or by improving existing open space provision;
- Ensure that new development contributes positively to the character and appearance of the area, increasing recreational and/or biodiversity value, and where appropriate provides or contributes to the provision of accessible green space networks linking urban areas;
- Focus resources into improving access to and enhancing currently underused facilities (particularly parks and play areas) within the borough and adjoining districts to help reduce the impact on other existing resources which are threatened by high user numbers; and
- Seek to maintain and enhance the role of undesignated green infrastructure assets such as urban street trees and incidental green spaces in reducing the impacts of climate and other environmental changes.



Cassiobury Park and the River Gade

Policy GI 1 - Green Infrastructure

All green infrastructure assets identified through the Open Space audit and the Green Infrastructure Study will be protected for their recreational, environmental, visual, and wildlife value. Development which results in a net loss of provision will not normally be acceptable.

Priorities for Green Infrastructure will focus on conserving and enhancing the following key assets and the linkages between them:

- Cassiobury Park;
- Whippendell Wood (outside the borough but owned and managed by Watford Borough Council);
- Colne and Gade Valleys and Grand Union Canal;
- Chalk landscape valleys;
- The borough's sites of Special Scientific Interest; Local Nature Reserves, wildlife sites, key biodiversity areas and priority habitats and species identified by the Hertfordshire Biodiversity Action Plan.

Where opportunities arise, new facilities should be provided and enhanced in line with the Green Spaces Strategy, the Green Infrastructure Plan, and the Infrastructure Delivery Plan. In particular development proposals located in the town centre and close to the Colne Valley Strategic link will be expected to make provision for better access to or the enhancement of the strategic infrastructure link. Development proposals in areas which are deficient in open space will be expected to improve provision by establishing new open space where possible or improving accessibility to, and the quality of, existing open space.

Proposals for new development should contribute to the creation, extension and enhancement of existing Green Infrastructure provision. Where appropriate contributions to future management and maintenance of new provision will be sought.

Proposals for new development should demonstrate that they are not compromising the integrity of the Green Infrastructure network, by causing fragmentation, damage to, or isolation of Green Infrastructure assets including natural habitats and species. Development proposals will be encouraged to enhance links for wildlife to existing GI assets. In addition to the above, where appropriate proposals which contribute to the following will be encouraged.

- Measures to relieve the impact of current high usage levels of Cassiobury Park and Whippendell Wood.
- Increased quality and numbers of urban street trees.
- Opportunities and land for residents to grow food.
- Wetland enhancement and sustainable water management in the Gade and Colne Valleys

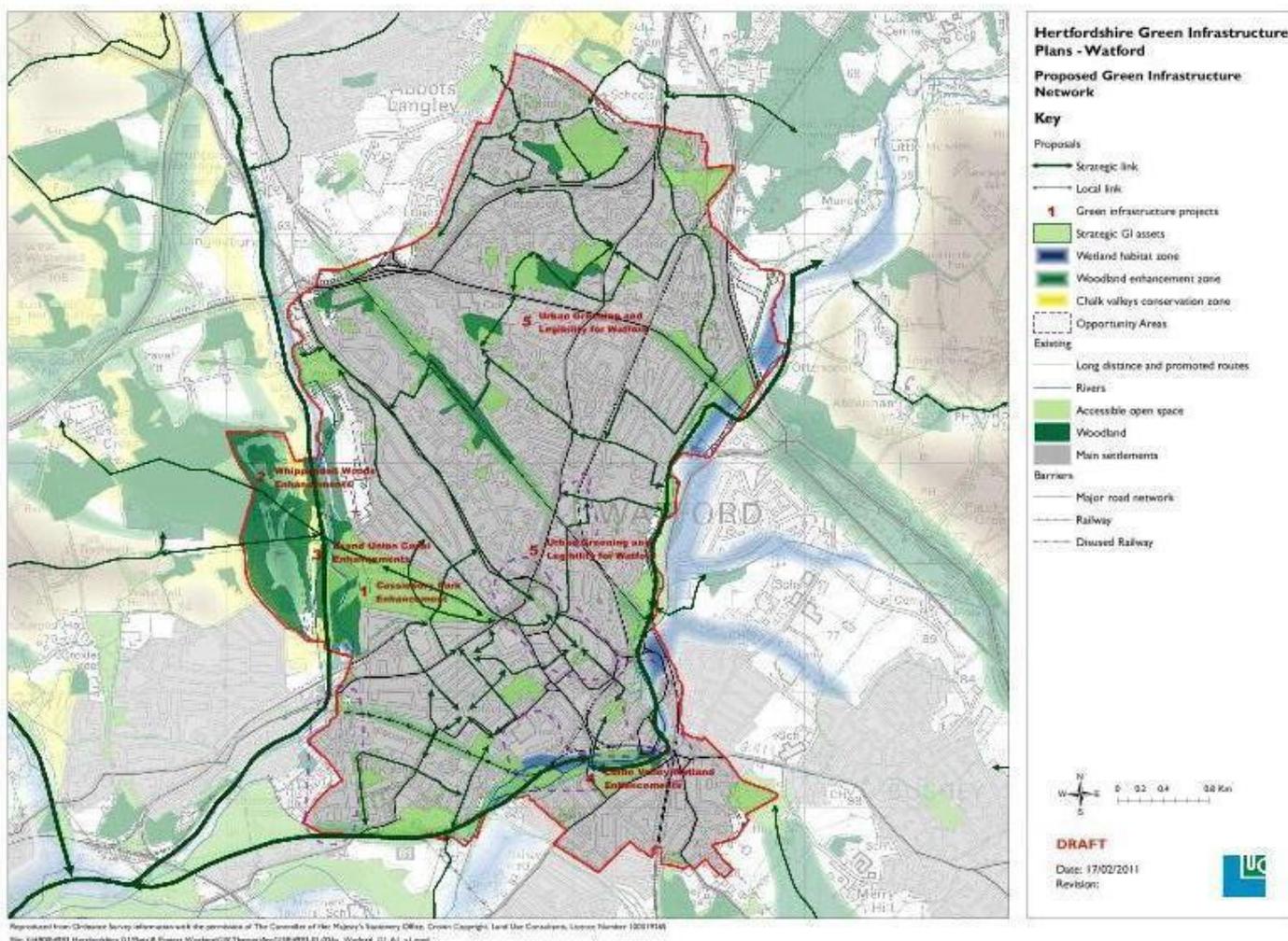
While the principle is to retain the existing **Green Belt boundary**, minor adjustments to deal with some inconsistencies will be considered in the preparation of the Site Allocations DPD and accompanying proposals map. The Green Infrastructure evidence base will inform the Site Allocations DPD and will be considered in assessing applications for new development.

The change (in hectares) of total open space managed by Watford Borough Council will be monitored, as will the amount of eligible open space managed to Green Flag Award standards.

The council will plan for Green Infrastructure in partnership with neighbouring local authorities; Three Rivers, Hertsmere and St Albans; the County Council and other Hertfordshire authorities, as well as relevant interest groups and stakeholders.

Ongoing qualitative analysis will be carried out through updated versions of this Green Spaces Strategy by Watford Borough Council. In some instances an improvement in the quality of Green Infrastructure may make it acceptable for minor open space loss, this will be examined on a case-by-case basis.

The Green Infrastructure Plan will provide details of projects which local communities can be involved in delivering.



Green Infrastructure Plan for Watford

In general, Watford residents considered that there was generally sufficient green space within the town with the exception of natural green space as has been determined through localised consultation. Based on the typology maps resulting from the audit, all green spaces were mapped onto GIS which then allowed quantities of provision to be determined per ward and provision of open space per person for the town. The results are summarised in Table 4.4. These are important as it allows the Council to determine defined provision standards that are locally derived, based on local needs and a local assessment. These results have been reassessed in 2017-18 in relation to quantities in relation to net gain and loss of open spaces. The principal loss is Farm Terrace allotments but this was offset by the new allotments at Paddock Road. Further open space provision is likely as part of the Watford Riverwell project in West Watford as new parks and the improved quality of the River Colne corridor become accessible.

Typology	Cal'land (M ²)	Central (M ²)	Holywell (M ²)	Legg'ts (M ²)	W'side (M ²)	Me'den (M ²)	Nascot (M ²)	Oxhey (M ²)	Park (M ²)	Stanb'g (M ²)	Tudor (M ²)	V'rage (M ²)
Parks & Gardens & Recreation Grounds	37,475	120,962	157,654	76,298	287,102	181,838	83,029	140,361	760,279	128,835	41,700	18,306
Amenity Green Spaces	7,971	7,672	53,176	20,219	40,284	75,274	23,911	21,673	11,241	11,666	20,648	0
Green Corridors	0	4,552	78,337	0	0	17,301	12,641	0	82,969	0	23,696	0
Natural/Semi-Natural Green Spaces	0	81,440	116,759	82,842	44,902	132,979	51,743	168,747	1,017,863	4,780	18,355	24,460
Allotments & Community Gardens	0	15,200	46,900	74,300	23,100	0	0	89,400	0	5,100	3,300	3,200
Churchyards & Cemeteries	0	4,109	0	0	3,925	0	0	0	0	126,059	0	57,889
Outdoor Sports Facilities	0	0	0	52,210	0	0	0	0	150,260	17,440	0	33,360
Children and Young Peoples Facilities	116	4,948	11,454	10,757	2,468	2,514	1,810	3,447	3,259	5,225	928	1,873
TOTAL	45,562	238,883	463,280	316,620	401,781	409,906	173,134	423,628	2,025,871	299,105	108627	139,088
M² per person	6	29	54	42	57	52	23	62	260	42	18	20

Note - Watford in 2012 has 5,065,785 m² of open space, which equates to 56m² per person.

NOTE - Watford in 2017, 5,045,485m² of open space, which equates to 52m² per person. The reduction is due to loss of Farm Terrace and increase in the population to 96,800 in mid-2016.

Table 4.4 - Quantity of Public Open Space in Watford per ward.

(Note: significant outdoor sports facilities are included within Parks, Gardens and Recreation Grounds typology)

4.4.2 Overview of Existing Provision

Watford has a large quantity of green space but a number of clear issues stand out:

- Natural green spaces, outdoor sports facilities and in particular parks, gardens and recreation grounds are the largest green space land uses;
- Provision of allotments in Watford is considerable with a range of sites and geographically well distributed across the town, despite the loss of Farm Terrace allotments (offset by new provision at Lower Paddock Road);
- There are significant opportunities for linking green spaces and enhancing the Green Infrastructure and wider public realm of the town.

4.5 Accessibility Audits and Distance Thresholds

There are three key factors relating to Watford's geography which has an important bearing on the formulation of distance thresholds for the area and determining which communities have "accessibility deficiencies" to different forms of provision.

The key factors are:

1. The compact and urban nature of Watford;
2. The proximity of facilities in neighbouring boroughs and knowledge that local people are likely to use; and
3. The significant lack of opportunities for creating new and extra provision of green space within the borough.

4.5.1 The Nature of Distance Thresholds

Distance thresholds are not hard facts, but a broad and flexible guide to the distance which people in general will be willing to travel in order to use or visit a facility or space. They are affected by many issues such as human factors (age issues) and individual circumstances and variations in external circumstances, such as physical barriers (rail and road corridors).

There are two other key points:

1. The distance that people in any particular area travel to spaces or facilities is a function of the distribution of provision, coupled with the range of factors summarised above. In an area with little provision, empirically established distance thresholds will be much higher than in another area with a high level of well distributed provision;
2. There is a clear difference between people's need to travel and willingness to do so. Rugby players may not be willing to travel more than a mile, for instance, to their local club, but the distance they will need to travel to take part in matches depends primarily on the geographical area covered by the league in which their team plays. The higher a player's standard of skill, the wider this area will be.

4.6 Accessibility Audit Findings

Distance thresholds were mapped using GIS to determine accessibility deficiencies for:

- Parks, Gardens and Recreation Grounds; and
- Natural and Semi-Natural Green Spaces;

4.6.1 Parks, Gardens and Recreation Grounds

There are 29 sites identified as parks, gardens and recreation grounds in Watford, covering 203 hectares. This equates to 2.1ha per 1,000 population. The standards suggest applying a distance threshold of 600m around parks and gardens, equivalent to a 15 minute walk time. When this is applied, creating buffer zones on the map, clear but very small areas of deficiency of accessible parks and gardens can be identified.

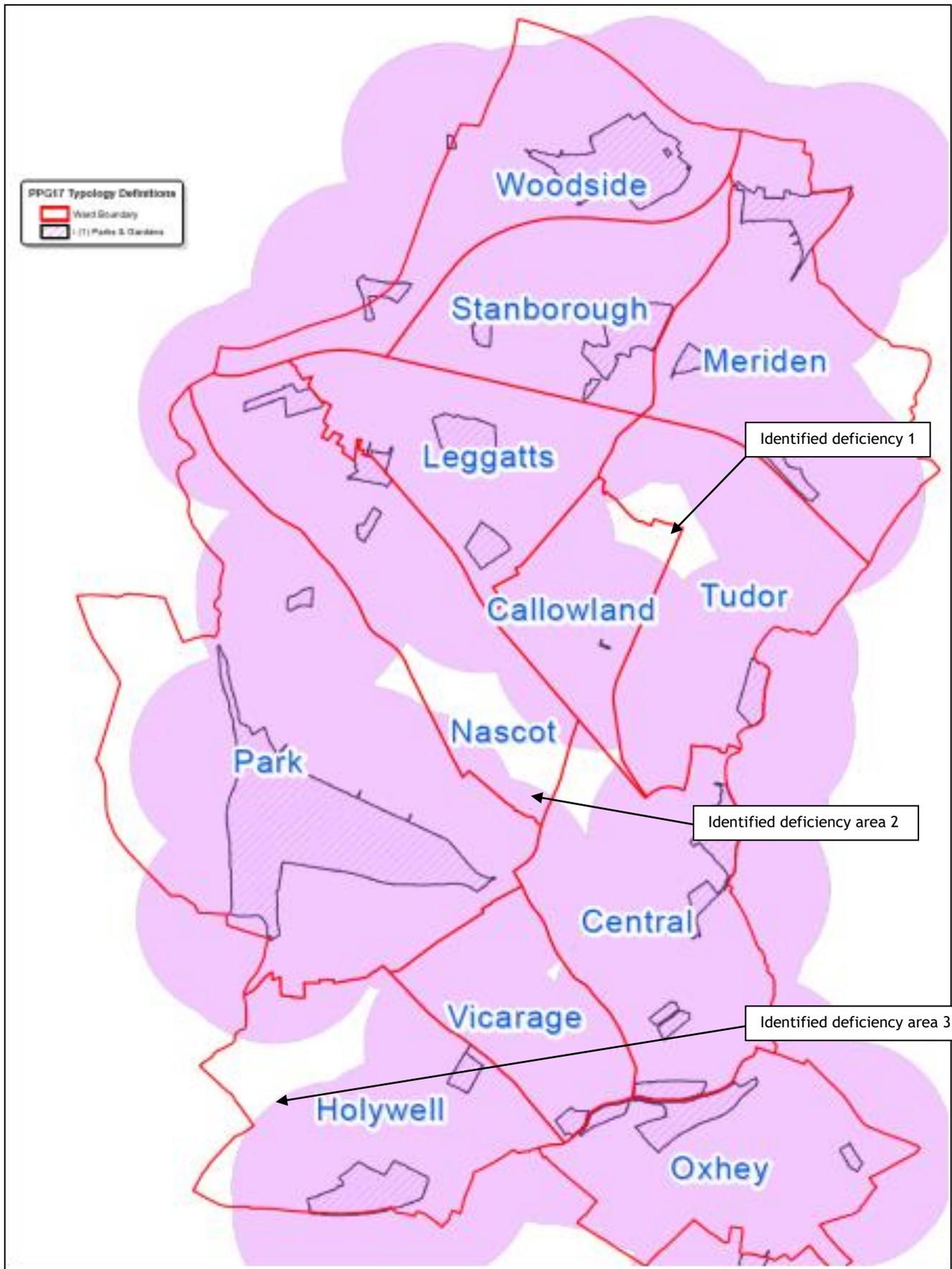
These areas are identified on the map above. Area 1 is in North Watford, around Bushey Mill Lane and the Greycain Industrial Estate. Area 2 is to the north of the Town Centre, mainly in Nascot Ward. The third area of deprivation is around the Caxton Business Park in the Holywell area.

There is less priority to provide provision in the Caxton Way and Greycain Industrial areas as these areas have a relatively low population density and are designated employment areas. However the area of deficiency identified to the north of the Town Centre (area 2) is a key priority area as the population density is relatively high in this area.

It is likely that the larger (Green Flag designated) parks of Cassiobury (75 hectares) and Woodside Playing Fields (25 hectares) serve a greater catchment area than the 15 minute walk time mapped. In reality residents do travel further to access these facilities, therefore it can be expected that residents out of the buffer zone in area two will certainly travel to Cassiobury Park.



Cheslyn House and Gardens



Parks, Gardens and Recreation Grounds distance thresholds

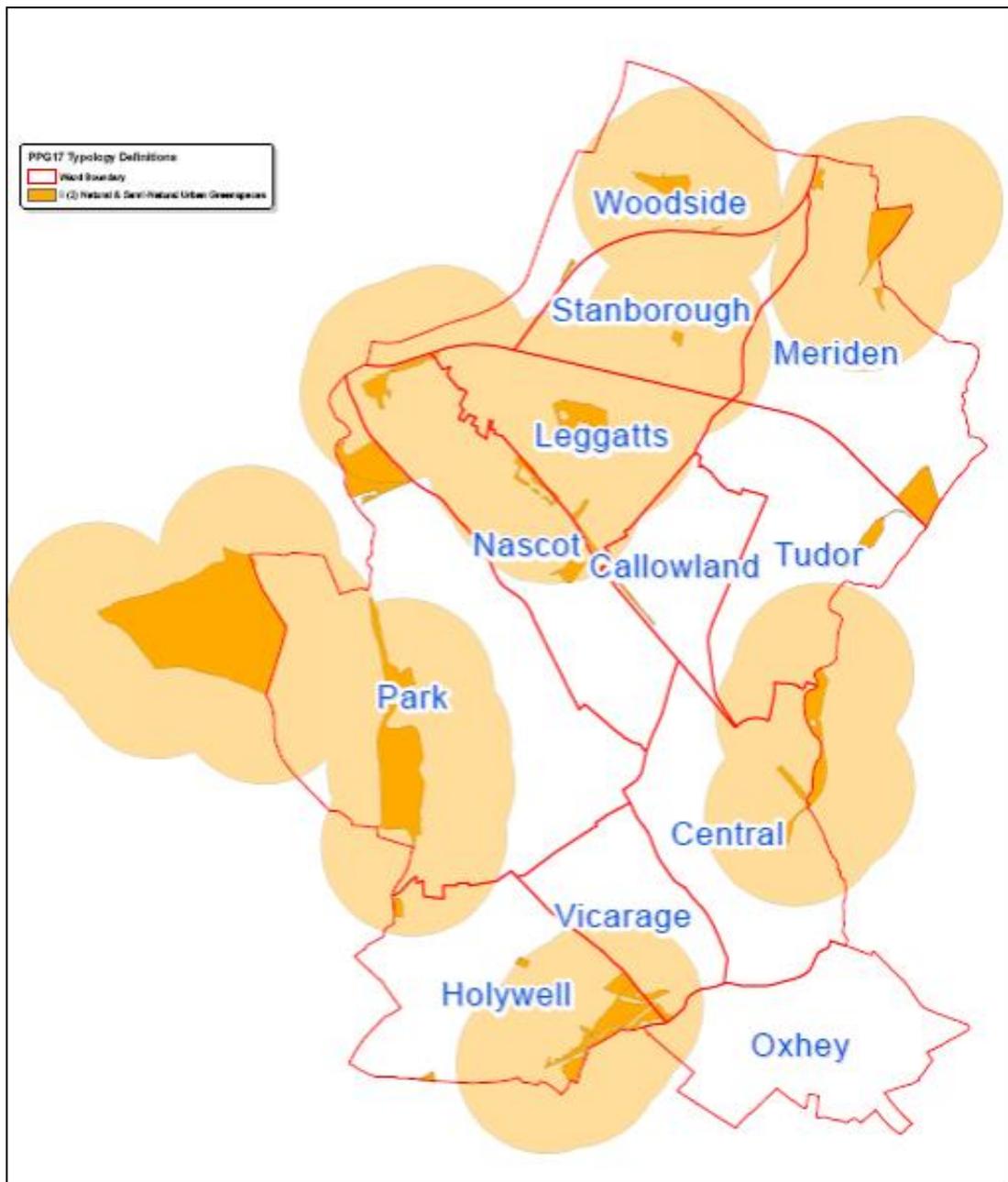
4.6.2 Natural and Semi Natural Green Spaces

The typology of natural and semi-natural green spaces, as set out in the previous PPG17: A Companion Guide includes woodland (coniferous, deciduous, mixed) and scrub, grassland (e.g. downland, meadow), heath or moor, wetlands (e.g. marsh, fen), open running water, wastelands (including disturbed ground), and bare rock habitats (e.g. cliffs, quarries, pits). These provide wildlife conservation, biodiversity and environmental education and awareness.

There are 34 sites classified as natural and semi-natural green spaces in Watford covering 174 hectares, this is equal to 1.79ha per 1,000 population. 5 of these sites are identified as Local Nature Reserves. Watford is compact and dense urban area so it is to be expected that there will be gaps in the provision of natural green spaces.

The distribution of natural and semi-natural green spaces is generally around the edge of the borough with a large area in the centre, and down towards Oxhey, out of the 600m buffer zone.

Natural and Semi Natural Green Spaces Distance Thresholds



4.6.3 Outdoor Sports Facilities

There are 57 outdoor sports facilities in Watford totalling 219.61 hectares. This equates to 2.26 hectares per 1,000 population. The provision is fairly well spread throughout the borough and it is reasonable to expect residents to travel to pitches and other specific facilities such as Woodside Playing Fields and Stadium. A detailed Sports Facilities Study was carried out in 2012 and assessed the following:-

- Usage – present and future;
- Quality of provision;
- Quantity of provision;
- Accessibility; and
- Capacity – present and future.

A detailed and comprehensive Sports Facilities Strategy has been developed and adopted. This Strategy has an emphasis on creating and developing multi-activity sports activity hubs based on 4 no Strategic Sports Sites. A further survey of playing pitches is underway in 2019 to re-assess any changing needs and requirements.

4.6.4 Allotments and Community Gardens

The typology of allotments, community gardens and city farms, set out in PPG17: A Companion Guide includes sites which provide ‘opportunities for those people who wish to do so to grow their own produce as part of a long term promotion of sustainability, health and social interaction’.

There are 12 sites in Watford managed by the Council totalling just over 26 hectares. This is equal to 0.27ha per 1,000 people. There is good access to allotments in the north and south of the borough but little access from the central strip. The National Society of Allotment and Leisure Gardeners (NSALG) suggests a national standard of 20 allotments per 1,000 households (i.e. 20 allotments per 2,000 people based on two people per house) or 1 allotment per 200 people. This equates to 0.125 hectares per 1,000 population based on an average plot size of 250m². Based on the current provision Watford is well over the NSALG standard, however, the majority of allotments are in the north and south of the borough with less provision in the central area of the town. There is an ongoing demand for allotments in Watford. Watford Community Housing Trust and Railtrack also have a small number of allotments available to residents, but these have not been included in this assessment as the standard is more than achieved.

4.6.5 Children’s and Young People’s / Teenage Facilities

There are 55 sites classified as provision for children and young people, totalling just under 5 hectares – 0.05ha per 1,000 population.

Although there are gaps within each analysis area, the focus is on improving access to the various sites as well as upgrading provision. It is considered that people will be willing to travel slightly further (especially along green corridors) to reach play areas of better quality.

To support this, a qualitative analysis on the play areas was performed in 2012 with analysis of such aspects as level and scope of play equipment, variety, signage, appropriate age segregation, proximity to dwellings, accessibility, drainage, and type of safety surfacing. The split between high quality and low quality sites was 70:30 indicating the impact of the ongoing improvements to many sites in the town, but identified that considerable work was still required to improve remaining areas. Since 2013, significant investment has been carried out in all our play areas with further investment planned from 2019 – 2022. In 2017, a review was also carried out of accessibility in relation to disabilities and based on Play Inclusive Play Areas (PiPA) principles. This highlighted that the majority of play areas in the borough were able to meet at least 64% of the PiPA criteria but with opportunities to address some issues.

4.6.6 Amenity Green space

The amenity green space typology, as set out in PPG17: A Companion Guide defines sites as offering 'opportunities for informal activities close to home or work or enhancement of the appearance of residential or other areas'. These include informal recreation spaces, housing green spaces, 'village greens' and other incidental space.

49 sites classified as amenity green space are identified in Watford, totalling 29 hectares – 0.30ha per 1,000 population.

There are gaps within the densely populated area to the east of the Town Centre around Queens Road, improved access to existing provision will be sought in the medium term. Most of these sites fall within the management regime and ownership of Watford Community Housing and are out of the Council's control. Whilst these sites may offer opportunities for local recreation, they offer little in the way of play value, biodiversity, heritage and many are low quality and low value. These sites should be re-assessed in light of wider planning policies on the basis that accessibility to other higher quality and higher value open spaces are available.

4.6.7 Green Corridors

The green corridors typology, as set out in PPG17: A Companion Guide includes sites that offer opportunities for 'walking, cycling or horse riding, whether for leisure or travel purposes and opportunities for wildlife migration'. This includes river and canal banks, road and rail corridors, cycle routes and pedestrian paths within towns, rights of way and permissive paths.

There are fairly extensive green corridors around the borough boundary, covering 22 hectares – 0.23ha per 1,000 population. It is not appropriate to apply accessibility standards to public rights of way and green corridors due to their linear nature and usage (often via many access points).

Green infrastructure principles will be applied to all aspects of green corridors. All green infrastructure assets identified through the Open Space audit and the Green Infrastructure Study will be protected for their recreational, environmental, visual, and wildlife value. Development which results in a net loss of provision will not normally be acceptable.

Priorities for Green Infrastructure will focus on conserving and enhancing the following key assets and the linkages between them:

- Cassiobury Park;
- Whippendell Wood (outside the borough but owned and managed by Watford Borough Council);
- Colne and Gade Valleys and Grand Union Canal;
- Chalk landscape valleys;
- The borough's sites of Special Scientific Interest; Local Nature Reserves, wildlife sites, key biodiversity areas and priority habitats and species identified by the Hertfordshire Biodiversity Action Plan.

4.6.8 Cemeteries and Churchyards

The typology of cemeteries, churchyards and burial grounds, as set out in PPG17: A Companion Guide includes areas for 'quiet contemplation and burial of the dead, often linked to the promotion of wildlife conservation and biodiversity'.

There are four sites in Watford totalling 19.2 hectares. This equates to 0.20 hectares per 1,000 population. It must be noted that two of these sites are no longer used for burials. However they still have amenity value as places of quiet contemplation.

Two cemeteries are currently in service within the borough. Both are owned and maintained by the council. Vicarage Road Cemetery is at capacity. North Watford Cemetery has approximately 7-9 years capacity remaining.

New sites for cemeteries have been examined through the site allocations development plan document and an adopted 10 year cemetery strategy 2016-2026. Whilst 7-9 years may seem a considerable life span for the cemetery it is essential to be aware that establishing a new burial ground can take a considerable amount of time (3-4 years) due to the needs associated to satisfying the Environment Agency and gaining planning consent. Therefore, work needs to commence as soon as possible in looking to identify new ground and ensure it is reserved for future use or alternatively/additionally to examine ways to increase the capacity of the land to lengthen the period of availability such as grave re-use or policy restrictions on who can be accepted for burial, and charging policies to deter non-residents.

4.7 Setting, Developing and Applying Local Provision Standards

Standards for the green space typologies (as classified in Section 1 of this Strategy and applied throughout the Strategy) consider surpluses and deficiencies in provision on the basis of quantitative, qualitative analysis and any consultation undertaken. National recommended guidance has been used to inform the appropriate distance thresholds, which have been applied using GIS mapping to demonstrate potential surplus/deficiencies in provision. In order to set provision by standards it is important to consider any standards previously applied by the Council and through the planning framework.

The standard for green space previously applied reflected the National Playing Fields Association standard of 2.4 hectares per 1,000 population (The former Six Acre Standard which equates to 2.4m² per person)

The location, accessibility and quality of green space is also important in ensuring that the areas are well used and appropriate to the needs of the Watford community.

Setting distance thresholds for each type of open space for all areas is not easy to achieve, as many factors will influence travel times. The figures are based on generic average travel times. However the standards provided, provide guidance that help to identify gaps in provision and meet local needs as identified through detailed analysis and benchmarking.

In developing and applying standards of provision, it is important to be clear that:

- National standards of recommended provision have been used for comparative purposes only along with benchmarking with similar authorities;
- Existing standards of provision relate to the current level of provision of a specific typology; and
- Recommended standards of provision are based on local assessment and analysis, but may be the same as a national recommended standard if appropriate, and specifically where current levels of provision do not meet a nationally recommended standard as a minimum. Equally, the future recommended standard may be the existing provision, if it is particularly high, and to lose it would significantly change the natural character of the area as would be the case in Watford.

It is not appropriate to set local standards in the same way for each typology; this is because the majority of people access different types of provision in different ways, for example, walking to a park or children's play area, driving to an outdoor sports facility. In addition, the way in which people choose to access different types of provision may be influenced by locational factors, for example, a high quality park may be within cycling or driving, but not walking distance. It is also important to take into consideration the extreme urban nature of Watford and its compact nature.

With this in mind, we have developed a set of standards below for each typology. For each typology, we have identified a benchmark based on authorities who have carried out similar work and studies. The Middlesbrough example is especially appropriate due to its compact and dense urban nature with lack of access to open countryside and pressures on existing spaces.



North Watford Cemetery

4.7.1 Parks, Gardens and Recreation Grounds

- **Existing Local Plan Quantity Standard:** None
- **Existing Provision:**
 - **Watford** 2.1ha per 1,000 population which equates to 21m² per person
- **Proposed Quantity Standard:** 20m² per person

Quantity: The total quantity of provision should at least match the amount of provision required by the application of the quantity standard. **Benchmark:** (Blyth 3.6m² per person; Mid Sussex 2.0m² per person; Middlesbrough 13m² per person)

- **Accessibility Standard**
 - **Straight Line Walking Distance Threshold:** 600 m
 - **Straight Line Driving Distance Threshold:** Not applicable

Benchmark: (Blyth 900 m; Mid Sussex 900 m; Horsham 1000 m; Middlesbrough 600m)

Accessibility: All dwellings should be within the walking distance threshold of at least one park, garden, recreation ground or a sports pitch site providing opportunities for informal recreation.

Justification: All residents should have easy access to a park, garden or recreation ground. This means that accessibility is more important than quantity. Suitable designed and managed sports pitches can also fulfil some of the functions of parks and recreation grounds, but there will be a need for additional space over and above that required for the pitches and support accommodation alone. Where particular forms of green space can be multifunctional – and recreation grounds generally contain a mix of several recreation opportunities – this makes the most effective use of land. This is especially relevant within a dense urban where recreation grounds, sports fields are often multi-functional.

Deficiencies: None, apart from small areas identified in North Watford, Nascot and north of Holywell.

Section 106/Community Infrastructure Levy Policy: The Council will seek contributions from all developments which will increase the use made of parks, such as residential and office developments as well as improving access to and quality of existing parks such as Cassiobury Park.

Opportunities: Continue to upgrade the quality parks, gardens and recreation grounds to improve qualitative deficiencies. Reduction of existing parks and gardens would significantly change the natural character of the town.

4.7.2 Amenity Green Space

- **Existing Local Plan Quantity Standard:** None
- **Existing Provision:**
 - **Watford** 0.30ha per 1,000 population which equates to 3.0m² per person
- **Proposed Quantity Standard:** Not Appropriate

Quantity It is not desirable for amenity green space to be a discrete category of provision. Instead, the Council and its partners will adopt a policy of supporting its integration into other forms of green space wherever possible. Where there is under provision of parks, local amenity green space could be upgraded to meet any identified deficiency. Where there is over provision of parks, local amenity green space, where of low quality and low value, alternative uses or disposal should be considered. **Benchmark:** (Blyth 6.0m² per person; Horsham 4.0m² per person; Middlesbrough 6.5m² per person)

- **Accessibility Standard:**
 - **Straight Line Walking Distance Threshold:** 450 m

Benchmark: (Blyth 300 m; Mid Sussex 300 m; Horsham 350 m; Middlesbrough 350m)

Accessibility: Every dwelling within all settlements should be within the walking distance threshold of at least one local amenity green space or public access pitch.

Justification: Accessibility is more important than quantity because accessible, high quality green spaces meet local needs better than larger, more distant sites. Most forms of green space are multi-functional and therefore serve a number of purposes, the most important of which is to “soften” and enhance the appearance of an area & provide an attractive setting for buildings and for pathways and other transport routes. When assessing whether there is adequate amenity space in an area, it is important to consider the whole of the green network. Therefore, distance thresholds for amenity green spaces can be applied to other forms of green space where they serve an amenity function.

Section 106/Community Infrastructure Levy Policy: The Council will seek contributions from residential developments to the enhancement of Local Amenity green space only if there are deficiencies in parks, gardens and recreation grounds, sports pitch provision, play areas and natural/semi-natural green space and to the agreed provision standards for those typologies if deemed appropriate. Where disposals are recommended, S106 / CIL contributions should be considered to improve the quality of nearby open spaces such as Parks & Gardens.

Opportunities: Upgrading of Local Amenity green space to enhanced facilities where current deficiencies are identified. There are gaps within the densely populated area to the east of the Town Centre around Queens Road, improved access to existing provision will be sought in the medium term.

4.7.3 Natural and Semi-Natural Green space

- **Existing Local Plan Quantity Standard:** None
- **Existing Provision:**
 - **Watford** 1.79ha per 1,000 population which equates to 1.8m² per person
- **Proposed Quantity Standard:** Not Appropriate

Quantity: It is not desirable for accessible natural green space to be a discrete category of provision. Instead, the Council and its partners will adopt a policy of supporting its integration into other forms of green space wherever possible. **Benchmark:** (Blyth 20m² pp; Horsham 20m² pp; Middlesbrough 0.5m² pp)

- **Accessibility Standard:**
 - **Straight Line Walking Distance Threshold:** 600 m

Benchmark: (Blyth 900 m; Mid Sussex 600 m; Horsham 1000 m; Middlesbrough 950m)

Accessibility: Every dwelling should be within 600 m of at least one accessible natural green space.

Site Size and Accessibility: Many dwellings in Watford have less than average accessibility to open countryside but reasonable access to natural/semi-natural green space. Well located accessible natural green space will be given a high degree of protection by Watford Borough Council and will be protected by policies relating to nature conservation or specific nature conservation designations.

Justification: Natural green spaces offer local residents and visitors the opportunity to experience the great outdoors and to be close to nature. Sites such as woodlands, local nature reserves and potential wetland habitat networks should be easily accessible to all residents. When coupled with high quality, accessibility is more important than quantity because many smaller but higher quality sites should have a greater capacity to accommodate users than fewer larger and often lower quality ones. They should also provide a better experience for visitors.

Deficiencies: Across most of the central areas of the town.

Section 106/Community Infrastructure Levy Policy: The Council will **not** ask developers to provide new on-site natural green spaces but seek contributions towards the enhancement of either existing natural green spaces and to increase the biodiversity of other existing green space typologies such as parks and gardens, sports pitches sites, education land and local amenity green space, particularly in the central area.

Opportunities: Improve access to Green Infrastructure based on Policy GI 1 - Green Infrastructure.

All green infrastructure assets identified through the Open Space audit and the Green Infrastructure Study will be protected for their recreational, environmental, visual, and wildlife value. Development which results in a net loss of provision will not normally be acceptable.

Priorities for Green Infrastructure will focus on conserving and enhancing the key assets and the linkages between them.

4.7.4 Equipped Play Areas

- **Existing Local Plan Quantity Standard:** Up to 8 m² per person based on the NPFA standard for **play space**

- **Existing Provision:**

- **Watford** 0.05ha per 1,000 population which equates to 0.5m² per person

- **Proposed Quantity Standard:** 0.6m² per person – (based on fixed equipped play areas)

Quantity: The total quantity of provision should at least match the amount of provision required by the application of the quantity standard.

Benchmark: (Blyth 0.8m² per person; Mid Sussex 0.65m² per person; Horsham 0.5m² per person; Middlesbrough 0.5 m² per person)

- **Accessibility Standard:**

- **Straight Line Walking Distance Threshold:** 500m

Benchmark: (Blyth 300 m; Mid Sussex 300 m; Horsham 350 m; Middlesbrough 500m)

Accessibility: All dwellings with more than one bedroom should be within the walking distance threshold of at least one fixed equipment play area.

Justification: All children should be able to use play areas. These spaces also meet a valuable social need for parents and carers. Accessibility is more important than quantity because many young children will not be able to walk far to a play area.

Deficiencies: There are no significant deficiencies across the town.

Section 106/Community Infrastructure Levy Policy:

In the short term, developer contributions to be utilised in improving existing play areas.

Opportunities: The town is well served by a large number of play areas but there are opportunities to improve play sites in key locations, in particular in regional and community park sites where destination play facilities with youth activity areas should be developed further.

4.7.5 Youth Activity Areas

- **Existing Local Plan Quantity Standard:** None
- **Existing Provision:** Not Known
- **Proposed Quantity Standard:** 0.3m² per person

Quantity: The total quantity of provision should at least match the amount of provision required by the quantity standard.

Benchmark: (Blyth 0.1m² per person; Mid Sussex 0.3m² per person; Horsham 0.2-0.4m² per person; Middlesbrough 0.3m² per person)

- **Accessibility Standard:**

- **Straight Line Walking Distance Threshold:** 600 m

- **Straight Line Driving Distance Threshold:** Not applicable

Benchmark: (Blyth 600 m; Mid Sussex 600 m; Horsham 1000 m; Middlesbrough 500m)

Accessibility: All dwellings with more than one bedroom should be within walking distance of at least one neighbourhood youth area such as a MUGA or Youth Shelter.

Justification: Young people tend to be a neglected group in terms of access to community infrastructure, partly because their needs can be difficult to define. Indeed, many young people are unable to give a clear answer when asked to identify the facilities they would like in their area.

However, young people have every right to “hang about” and indulge in largely harmless but sometimes noisy activities close to home, so there is a clear need to provide for them. Given the nature of youth culture and the difficulties of territorialism, it is important that young people should have a degree of choice, through access to more than one youth area within their neighbourhood.

Deficiencies: There are considerable deficiencies across the whole town.

Section 106/Community Infrastructure Levy Policy: In the short term, developer contributions to be utilised in improving existing youth activity areas if within the appropriate distance threshold.

Opportunities: Longer term development of youth sites and activity areas in regional and community parks.

4.7.6 Allotments and Community Gardens

■ **Existing Local Plan Quantity Standard:** None

■ **Existing Provision:**

- **Watford** 0.27ha per 1,000 population which equates to 2.7m² per person

■ **Proposed Quantity Standard:** 3m² per person

Quantity: The National Society of Allotment and Leisure Gardeners (NSALG) suggests a national standard of 20 allotments per 1,000 households (i.e. 20 allotments per 2,000 people based on two people per house) or 1 allotment per 200 people. This equates to 0.125 hectares per 1,000 population based on an average plot size of 250m².

Benchmark: (Blyth 4.4m² per person; Mid Sussex 1.75m² per person; Horsham 1.25m² per person)

■ **Accessibility Standard:**

- **Straight Line Walking Distance Threshold:** 1000 m
- **Straight Line Driving Distance Threshold:** 4.5 km

Benchmark: (Blyth 900 m; Mid Sussex 900 m; Horsham 1000 m; Middlesbrough 700m)

Accessibility: All dwellings should be within walking distance threshold of at least one allotment site within the settlement hierarchy or within driving distance as the 2011 allotment survey highlighted that well over 50% of tenants drive to their sites. .

Justification: There is a reasonable demand for allotments in Watford where gardens linked to dwellings can often be very small, or almost non-existent.

Deficiencies: Based on the current provision Watford is well over the NSALG standard, however, the majority of allotments are in the north and south of the borough with limited provision in the middle of the town. There is a continued demand for allotments in Watford despite limited promotion.

Section 106/Community Infrastructure Levy Policy: In the short term, developer contributions to be utilised in improving existing allotment areas across the town.

Opportunities: Improve access to allotments to allow them to become a viable option for people living in the centre of Watford. It is accepted that residents may have to drive to allotments, particularly if they are carrying equipment.

4.7.7 Outdoor Sports Facilities

- **Existing Local Plan Quantity Standard:** NPFA six acre standard
- **Existing Provision:** (does not include School Playing Fields, as most are inaccessible)
 - **Watford** 2.26ha per 1,000 population which equates to 23m² per person
- **Proposed Quantity Standard:** 20m² per person

Quantity: The total quantity of grass and artificial pitches available to community based clubs and teams should at least match the amount of provision required by the application of the quantity standards. **Benchmark:** (Blyth 10m² per person; Mid Sussex 12.25m² per person; Horsham 14m² per person; Middlesbrough 11m² per person)

- **Accessibility Standard:**
 - **Straight Line Walking Distance Threshold:** 1000 m
 - **Straight Line Driving Distance Threshold:** Not applicable

Benchmark: (Blyth 900 m; Mid Sussex 900 m; Horsham 1000 m; Middlesbrough 850m)

Accessibility: All dwellings should be within walking distance of at least one playing pitch.

Justification: All residents should have the opportunity to take part in the pitch sport of their choice. In the first instance this requires enough pitches with accessibility being secondary as the competitive nature of sports pitches means that participants will not always use the pitch nearest to their home. In addition, roughly half of all matches are played "away". Cricket and rugby teams tend to draw their membership from a wider area than football teams and many football pitches are also used by young people for mini-soccer or casually for "kickabouts". There is especially a need for football pitches to be more accessible than cricket or rugby pitches.

Deficiencies: None

Section 106/Community Infrastructure Levy Policy: The Council will seek contributions from all developments which will increase the use made of sports pitches, such as residential and office developments.

Opportunities: Enhancement of facilities across the town due to qualitative issues, especially in relation to changing facilities. Emphasis on strategic multi activity hubs including Woodside Playing Fields and King George V Playing Fields. Sports Facilities Strategy developed.

5 The Strategic & Local Green Space Network - Policies and Aspirations

The overall quality, accessibility and quantity of green space in Watford is largely very good, well maintained and valued by our local communities. However, previous consultation also raised a number of concerns and issues such as perceived deficiencies in some typologies of open space and the need for continuous improvement and longer term investment. The policies we have derived in Section 6 for the Council and our partners to aim for, leading to a more detailed action plan will assist the Council in this task. However, we need to be more specific as to what our priorities are and what specifically we need to concentrate on. With the limited and often declining resources we have, as well as externally and from developers, we need to continue to prioritise accordingly. We proposed a “**Strategic Green Space Network**”, the sites which are most important to us, which need to be **protected** as well as continually **enhanced** through capital **investment** as well as enhanced management and maintenance where appropriate and realistic. Many of these sites were already high quality through continued high standards of maintenance, but as prescribed, many required long term management plans and long term investment to improve their long term futures and development. We have therefore significantly invested in our “Strategic Green Space Network” and quality standards have improved but much is still required to be done. This updated strategy will allow us and our partners to continue to deliver our Green Space Vision and aspirations.

5.1 Our Vision

“Watford will have a network of accessible, high quality and highly valued green spaces to be proud of, promoting sustainability, supporting bio-diversity and extensively contributing to the economic, social and environmental aspirations of the town”.

5.2 Delivering Change

The Council has been managing within existing resources in many areas but has also been improving open spaces and facilities proactively as a result of Section 106 Developer contributions. However, in the continued economic climate, these resources are likely to decline and available funding will need to be delivered and allocated where it is really needed most. This Green Spaces Strategy emphasises the need to continue to improve proactively. However, community involvement in developing a strategic network of green spaces and in improving sites is critical. Although involving the community can require increased resources, these efforts should result in lower maintenance costs through an increase in local pride and less vandalism/abuse through peer pressure. The Strategic Green Space Network as outlined below is the continued priority for the Council with Developer Contributions / Community Infrastructure Levy and other funding to be targeted towards these sites. The open spaces audit has confirmed that there is generally sufficient open space provision across the town and that the overall priority should be to continue to enhance sites, based on this agreed strategic network.

Delivering this change will be through delivering the Councils revised Corporate Policies which are summarised below and through a number of policy development areas and ultimately through a series of Action Plans detailed in Section 8, with short, medium and long term targets, working with strategic partners, local communities and key stakeholders. Not all may be achievable, but a vision has now been created and targets and opportunities identified.

Corporate Policies

- Identify ways to manage the borough’s housing needs
- Champion smart growth and economic prosperity
- **Provide for our vulnerable and disadvantaged communities**
- Deliver a digital Watford to empower our community
- **Secure our own financial future**
- **Effective two-way engagement and communication**

- **Sound management and high performance**
- **Improving the town's environment.**

Policy Development Areas

We have therefore adopted a number of key policy development areas which embrace the above issues and are developed in detail in Section 7 - Action Plan and provide the necessary guidance in taking the strategy forward.

1. The Council recognises the importance and value of all its green spaces to Watford and it's diverse communities and will seek to protect and enhance them through the planning system;
2. The Council through partnership working with private and public organisations, as well as Friends and resident groups, will seek funding opportunities to sustainably manage and enhance publicly accessible green spaces in the interests of the whole Watford community;
3. The Council will work in conjunction with partners, users, and stakeholders and involve them in the "decision making" process relating to the use, development and management of the towns' green spaces;
4. The Council will work in partnership with local people and other agencies in order to provide cleaner, safer and greener environments. These will be publicly accessible and socially inclusive, catering for a wide range of people, ages and backgrounds for their enjoyment and safe use without the fear of crime;
5. The Council will encourage the use of Watford's green spaces as important centres of education as well as places to celebrate our cultural diversity;
6. The Council will encourage multifunctional use of green spaces to provide a balanced provision for play, sports, recreation and biodiversity, which will promote the health, enjoyment and well-being of Watford's local communities; and
7. The Council will protect and enhance Watford's biodiversity within its open spaces.

Objectives

- To provide and enhance a strategic network of accessible, high quality green space throughout Watford based on Green Infrastructure principles;
- To provide guidance for the effective planning and protection of open space, sport and recreational facilities which meet local needs by;
 - providing appropriate green space planning policies and standards which provide clarity and reasonable certainty for developers and landowners, which will be taken forward as part of the Development Plan;
 - ensuring the continued provision of green spaces is distributed and located appropriately throughout Watford;
 - promoting good green space design and management principles in all new and existing developments.
- To strengthen local community involvement and interest in Watford's green spaces by;
 - encouraging community participation in the design, management and care of their local green spaces;
 - promoting the value of green space as a major contributor to health and social well-being, via its use for recreational, educational and sporting activities;

- ❑ ensuring green spaces are locally valued and well used community assets.
- To improve Green Space by;
 - ❑ ensuring green spaces are locally accessible, clean, attractive, well maintained, fit for purpose and safe;
 - ❑ improving the existing green space contribution to the landscape, biodiversity and cultural value of Watford;
 - ❑ providing a sustainable approach to green space management and maintenance.



Harwood's Adventure playground

5.3 The Strategic Borough-Wide Network (based on the following)

Regional Parks & Open Spaces			
Cassiobury Park and Whippendell Wood (and LNR/SSSI)		Woodside Playing Fields (with Albans Wood LNR)	
Cheslyn House and Gardens		St Mary's Churchyard	
North Watford and Vicarage Road Cemeteries		River Colne Corridor	
Community Parks and Recreation Grounds			
Callowland Rec	Oxhey Park	King George V Playing Fields	Watford Fields
Garston Park (and LNR)	Oxhey Green	Knutsford Playing Fields	Watford Heath
Goodwood Rec	Radlett Road Playing Fields	Leaveden Green Rec	North Watford Playing Fields (Orchard Park)
Harebreaks Rec (and LNR)	Waterfields Rec	Meriden Park	Colne River Park (with Lairage Land LNR)
Local Parks & Open Spaces			
All Saints Churchyard		Munden Woods Open Space	
Cassio Common		Lingfield Way Open Space	
Buryfield Nature Garden		Oxhey Grange	
Canterbury Road Pocket Park		Russell Lane Wood	
East Drive Rec		Riverside Rec	
Glen Way Open Space		Riverside Park	
Harwoods Rec		Berry Avenue Open Space	
Lea Farm Rec			
Strategic Sports Sites (as identified in the Sports Facilities Strategy)			
RIVER COLNE EAST		CASSIOBURY SITE WEST	
HOLYWELL SOUTH		WOODSIDE NORTH	
Green links and corridors			
River Colne Corridor	River Gade Corridor	Grand Union Canal	Cassiobury Park

Table 5.3 Strategic Green Space Network - List of Sites



Oxhey Park Green Flag success in 2014/15

5.4 The Strategic Borough-Wide Network

The quality of all the strategic green space network sites should meet the quality standards requirements in all respects:

- ❑ The priorities are to enhance the quality of the regional, community and local sites in the strategic green space network;
- ❑ The priorities are to improve the accessibility of the sites in the strategic green space network;
- ❑ The priorities are to protect through the planning system all the sites in the strategic green space network;
- ❑ The priorities are to increase community and stakeholder involvement across Watford in all aspects of green space management, maintenance and development.

5.5 The Watford Provision Level

The spaces that the Council will seek to upgrade, enhance and maintain to ensure they are High Quality/High Value are included in the proposed strategic green space network in Table 5.3.

5.6 Opportunities and Sites for Review

Just over 30 sites across Watford are still currently classed as low quality and of low value. The Council will further review those spaces that have been classed as being genuinely low quality and low value, in the light of wider planning policies.

The policy on low quality low value sites is as follows:

- Enhance the quality of the green space provided it is possible also to enhance the value;
- Consider the space surplus to requirements in terms of its current use if value cannot be improved. Consider alternative uses.

Along with the above criteria, we will also include the following:

- Determine any other typology deficiencies in the area within distance thresholds;
- Determine how poor the quality and value is and whether enhancement is realistic;
- Determine future long term investment opportunities of each site;
- Determine local community “value” by localised consultation; and
- Opportunities for enhancement of nearby green space facilities within the green space network.



6 Key Green Space Issues - Our Vision and Strategy

6.1 Introduction

This chapter summarises the main issues facing the Council, its partners and stakeholders if it is to achieve the proposed vision for green spaces for Watford. We also describe some of the options facing us in achieving this goal. The development of a “fit for purpose” and updated Green Spaces Strategy for Watford is based around three key issues:

1. **Developing a Green Space Strategy Action Plan** – creating an agreed framework for the implementation of the strategy that will guide all future green spaces and public places improvements based on a defined action plan;
2. **Improving the Green Spaces Consultative Network** – identifying a way in which we could effectively involve more local people in decisions about the management and development of our green spaces and public places;
3. **Measuring Progress** – suggesting how we can measure what has been done and how much there is still to do.

6.2 The Vision for Watford’s Green Spaces

Watford will have a network of accessible, high quality and highly valued green spaces to be proud of, promoting sustainability, supporting bio-diversity and extensively contributing to the economic, social and environmental aspirations of the town.

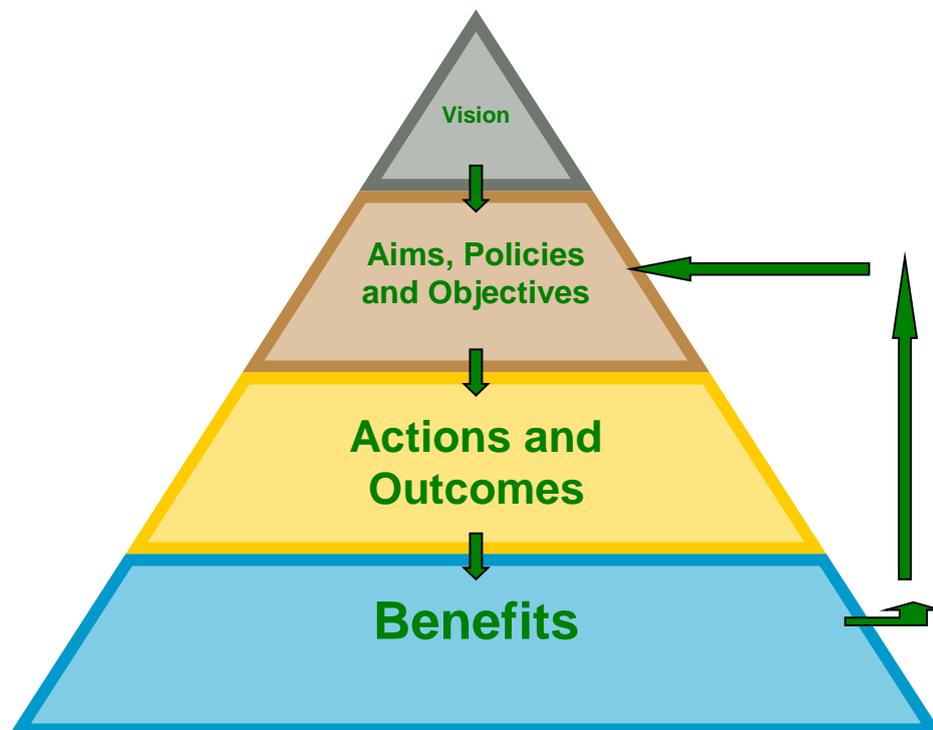


Figure 6.2 Delivering the Vision

This vision will guide and support Watford Borough Council’s actions on green spaces. This must be considered when designing and improving green spaces and management and maintenance regimes for them.

The vision has five key components:

1. A strong connected network and infrastructure of green spaces will be protected through the planning system, enhanced and managed to provide multi-functional benefits;
2. Green spaces will be socially inclusive, catering for a wide range of people, ages and backgrounds;
3. Green spaces will be enhanced and managed to maximise their biodiversity value;
4. Green spaces will make a substantial contribution to the visual amenity, identity, character and local distinctiveness of the town; and
5. Green spaces will be managed and maintained in a flexible, creative and sustainable manner seeking to minimise energy and chemical inputs, increasing re-cycling and through use of local materials.

Ten overarching strategy guidelines are proposed to expand the vision into real deliverable statements with a clear deliverable Action Plan.

STEWARDSHIP

1. The Council's Stewardship Role

As the representative of the residents of Watford, the Council will manage green spaces in the interests of the whole community.

The Council is the steward of many of Watford's most valuable green spaces and owns them in trust, now and for future generations.

2. Green Space History and Heritage

The Council will protect and preserve the historic and architectural heritage found within the Watford's green spaces. The Council will ensure that this heritage is protected, now and for the future.

MANAGEMENT

3. Green Spaces as Community Assets

Watford's green space is an essential and permanent community resource. The Council will work in conjunction with partners, users, and stakeholders and involve them in the "decision making" process relating to the use, development and management of the region's green spaces.

4. Investing in Community Green Spaces

The Council recognises that green spaces require investment. The Council will continue to actively seek resources for the regeneration of many green spaces, in partnership with the local community and external agencies based on a developed "strategic green space network". The Council will ensure any investment is sustainable, maintenance regimes are developed and where new developments and initiatives are introduced, maintenance issues are taken into account in the design, management and ongoing sustainability of the facility.

USE

5. Universal Access to Green Spaces

Watford's green spaces are available for use by all sections of the local community, including the business community. The Council will support and promote fully inclusive access and use of Watford's green spaces for all lawful purposes.

6. The Right to Safety

All sections of the local community have the right to use Watford's green spaces in safety and without fear of crime. The Council will work in partnership with local people and other agencies in order to provide cleaner, safer and greener environments.

7. Education for Citizenship

The Council recognises that green spaces are a rich resource for learning, not only about the living environment, but the town's history and culture. The Council will encourage the use of the town's green spaces as important centres of education as well as places to celebrate our cultural diversity.

8. Spaces for Play, Sport and Recreation

Watford's green spaces are an essential community resource in providing quality spaces for play, sport and recreation. The Council will ensure that these uses are provided for in health, enjoyment and well-being of the town's local communities.

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

9. Community Living Spaces

The Council will continue to develop green spaces to ensure that they remain "living spaces". The Council will protect and enhance the town's biodiversity, maximise resource efficiency by increasing recycling opportunities, establish a better use of essential energy sources and minimise the use of pesticides and chemicals.

10. Aiming High and Ensuring Quality

The Council will make best use of resources available to ensure the highest quality for all the town's green spaces. The Council will continue to adopt the principles of the Green Flag standard across all green spaces.

The Council's aim is to build on its success in the annual Green Flag awards and build on the early and ongoing awards for Cassiobury Park, Cheslyn House and Gardens and Woodside Playing Fields.



Oxhey Park sculptures

6.3 Key Issues

The Council identified a number of key issues for the future of green space provision in Watford and these have been updated to reflect the review of 2017.

- Involving local communities;
- Parks, Gardens & Recreation Grounds;
- Natural and Semi-Natural Green Space Areas;
- Green Infrastructure, connectivity and corridors;
- Equipped Play Areas and Youth Provision;
- Sports Facilities;
- Allotments;
- Green Space Opportunities;
- Partnership Working with local stakeholders;
- Green Space Management, Maintenance and Development; and
- Resources and Income Generation in Parks

We discuss these issues below in further detail.

6.3.1 Involving Local Communities

Needs

As identified throughout the work in developing the Green Spaces Strategy, there was a need to develop better ways of involving local communities in green space management, maintenance and development. A number of groups exist in relation to parks and open spaces in Watford and there are clear benefits to developing groups to work with green space management. These include a number of Friend's Groups and Resident's Associations. A key dimension of successful green space management is a willingness to engage local communities in the task, and to think creatively about means to make this happen. Community participation often needs to happen within a framework which gives weight to different voices within the community, and that is not unduly influenced by sectional interests. Involving the voluntary sector in any green space management can tap an under-utilised resource.

There is also a need to work with or continue to develop relationships with other partners with an interest in the management of green space, e.g. Herts and Middlesex Wildlife Trust, Canal and River Trust, Trust for Conservation Volunteers, Green Gym as well as local sports clubs.

Opportunities

With the development of this Green Spaces Strategy there were clear opportunities to further involve communities in green spaces in Watford. Some excellent work has already been undertaken with Friends and Community Groups such as the Friends of Cassiobury Park, Friends of Oxhey Park and Green Gyms but there is still enormous potential to involve further local communities, particularly in relation to the development of parks management plans for the community parks, improvements to play facilities as well as encouraging the number of Friends Groups. A Parks Forum and Allotments Forum also was formed in 2016 and were successful and these will continue.

The high quality but low value of some of the town's green spaces however means that the involvement of local communities is essential in delivering a better quality and connected green space network in relation to management, and in particular, development and assisting in attracting funding to allow much of this to happen.



Knutsford Playing Fields Green Gym which has now expanded into Cassiobury Park

6.3.2 Parks, Gardens and Recreation Grounds

Needs

The overall quality of parks, gardens and recreation grounds in Watford was excellent and they scored high due to the quality of maintenance. Also in most cases they continue to be highly valued by local communities. The strategy originally identified that parks and gardens should be a strategic priority and should continue to be maintained to a high standard to ensure all are high quality and high value. The successful management of Watford's green spaces depends upon a correct understanding of the nature and needs of different types of green spaces. Locally derived green space typologies are valuable to differentiate between green space types and their appropriate aspirations and management regimes. A clear distinction between ownership and management responsibilities for green space can help to establish a unified and integrated management regime.

Opportunities

A parks hierarchy was adopted in 2010 in relation to standards of maintenance based on regional, community and local parks and this seemed a sensible approach to adopt as well as adapt. Despite the fact that Watford is a small but compact town, it has a wide range of parks and gardens, so a three-tier hierarchy was developed:

Regional parks and open spaces: the major parks and open spaces with a good range of high quality facilities, intended to serve the whole town and a district-wide catchment. The Council will continue to seek to make these parks different and complementary. These parks should all be Green Flag standard parks and open spaces.

Community parks and recreation grounds: These should be within walking distance of each of the main neighbourhoods in the town, with a lesser range of facilities, but designed to complement the regional parks and open spaces, with an emphasis on providing local play opportunities as well as formal / informal sports facilities. The Council will continue to actively seek to maximise pedestrian and cycling access to these spaces and ensure they are invested in and maintained to a high standard. These should also be mostly Green Flag standard parks and open spaces.

Local parks and open spaces: these should be within walking distance of all neighbourhoods but with an emphasis on informal play and sports activity and may have fewer if any facilities.

6.3.3 Natural and Semi-Natural Green Space

Needs

There is a considerable amount of natural and semi-natural green space within Watford despite its compact and urban nature and with some significant and strategic sites within the town such as Whippendell Wood and the river corridors of the River Colne and River Gade. These are all important in relation to green infrastructure, local biodiversity as well as accessibility. However, a number of areas are deficient, and accessibility is an issue.

Opportunities

Natural green spaces offer local residents and visitors the opportunity to experience the great outdoors and to be close to nature. Such sites should be easily accessible to all residents and visitors but managed in a balanced way to ensure local biodiversity is not compromised. Significant opportunities also exist through the Hertfordshire Local Nature Partnership (LNP) whose purpose is to ensure the natural environment is fully valued in local decision making and delivers benefits for wildlife, people, landscapes and the local economy as well as the Colne Catchment Action Network, one of whose aims is to reconnect local communities with the heritage, raising awareness of the Colne Valley to more and a wider range of people through learning activities, information and interpretation resources, cultural events and volunteering.

6.3.4 Green Infrastructure, connectivity and corridors

Needs

Green infrastructure (GI) is an important part of the green spaces network providing visual, wildlife and sustainable transport links between the many urban green spaces and the outer countryside and green belt. In the face of competition for resources and environmental change, now more than ever we must look to our landscape and to sites to perform the widest range of functions for people, communities and quality of life, wildlife and ecosystems. In some cases, existing GI assets are delivering the necessary functionality, in others not. This pattern of demand and supply forms the basis for the analyses undertaken and proposals made in this plan. For example, issues relate to access and links, and the variable ability to reach assets as part of a green travel network. The Green Infrastructure Plan seeks to address links and connections, alternative green space provision and low cost, maximum benefit interventions such as improved landscape management to deliver a wider array of functions. It also looks at ways to influence sustainable living modes and transport choices through non spatial and educational projects to support spatial proposals.

Opportunities

The Council has identified with key professionals and community stakeholders, a series of potential projects to take forward the GI network and to deliver the functions identified in the GI Plan. The GI projects identified were as follows:

- Cassiobury Park Enhancement – completed in 2017;
- Whippendell Woods Enhancement – commenced in 2017;
- Grand Union Canal Enhancement;
- Colne River Park Enhancement – commenced in 2018;
- Colne Valley Wetland Enhancement; and
- Urban Greening and Legibility for Watford.

An essential part of effective GI delivery is a strategic, co-ordinated approach, to ensure that projects are resourced appropriately in terms of capital works and ongoing revenue activity. The Green Infrastructure Plan now forms part of the evidence base for Development Plan Documents (DPDs) in the Local Development Framework and green infrastructure issues are now included and addressed in the Development Plan Documents. The Council from 2017/18 has identified a major opportunity to improve the River Colne corridor linked to Watford Riverwell (the former Health Campus) and commenced a project in October 2017 as part of a 10-year plan to restore this important corridor. There are also opportunities in relation to improving the connectivity between existing parks, recreation grounds and other open spaces across Watford by urban greening, improving pedestrian links and wider accessibility.

6.3.5 Equipped Play Areas and Youth Provision - updated 2017

Needs

As a result of the lack of youth provision, teenagers can tend to colonise play facilities intended for younger children and their quality suffers as a result. There are some play areas across the town which are generally maintained to a high standard and therefore are classed as high quality but play value is low.

Opportunities

As part of the continued initiative to improve green space quality across the town, opportunities exist to continue to improve the quality, accessibility and play value of play areas and increase the number of youth facilities across the whole town. The development of youth and play facilities is an excellent way in which to empower a local

community to get involved whether through development of Multi Use Games Areas, shelters or provision of wheeled sports such as BMX or skateboarding.

6.3.6 Sports Pitches, Multi-Courts and Artificial Turf Pitches - updated 2017

Needs

The spread of outdoor sports pitches across Watford is very good. There are issues related to the quality of provision of changing facilities and some facilities such as football, tennis and lack of all-weather facilities, including 3G artificial turf pitches.

Opportunities

At the time of adoption of the Green Spaces Strategy, there was no Sports Facilities or Playing Pitch Strategy for Watford. However, the Council commissioned a detailed audit of sports facilities across the town in 2012, in particular relating to provision of rugby, football, cricket, tennis and hockey which led to a 10-year *'Sports Facilities Strategy'* which identified in particular the need for improved changing facilities to serve existing pitches and now provides an approach which prioritises this work in areas where maximum benefit can be gained by giving higher priority to those sites with most pitches, which could then be served by one building – the creation of multi-functional sports activity hubs – a Strategic Sports Sites. The Council identified four Strategic Sports Sites:-

RIVER COLNE EAST	CASSIOBURY SITE WEST
HOLYWELL SOUTH	WOODSIDE NORTH

The Council has commenced work on two of these sites with significant work on the River Colne East, incorporating Knutsford Playing Fields and Radlett Road Playing Fields and a Woodside North.



Knutsford Playing Fields

6.3.7 Allotments - updated 2017

Needs

The overall provision of allotments across Watford is well provided for, with demand steady but with waiting lists on some sites.

Opportunities

A strategy was developed after localised community consultation and local needs assessments. The “Watford Allotments Strategy 2013 – 2018” is now the overarching strategy for the provision of allotments in the Borough and includes all the background information, national, regional and local policies which are relevant to allotments as well as details of the consultation carried out. Significant investment was identified as being required on most of our sites and the need for more focussed promotion and availability of allotments was central to the delivery of the Action Plan contained within the Allotments Strategy. As a result, funding was allocated from the Council’s Capital Programme to invest £800,000 into all sites that were in need and included new fencing, toilets, footways and signage. This was completed in 2016 and with the closure of Farm Terrace allotments, with new provision made available at Lower Paddock Road. Allotments are an important leisure facility, especially for younger generations who are now taking up allotment gardening alongside more established users. (Note a new allotments strategy will be adopted in early 2020).

6.3.8 Green Space Opportunities

Needs

Watford overall still has sufficient quantity of green spaces but there is a conflict between the strongly expressed desire for better management and maintenance and what the Council can realistically afford especially with regards to the financial restraints the Council continues to face. Despite these pressures, there is also the view that local residents wish to have improved maintenance despite many sites scoring highly in the quality audit. Local expectations are always high!

Opportunities

There may be opportunities to rationalise some provision and possibly convert some spaces to other uses, for example cemetery space, or potentially, as a last resort, dispose of some sites which currently offer little value to local communities. The audit information already identifies those spaces that are of least value to the community or wildlife.

6.3.9 Partnership Working with Local Stakeholders

Issue

The delivery of a range of Action Plans, investments and enhancements in difficult economic times is simply not achievable without partnership working, whether with a local community group, residents association or organisations such as Green Gym, the Wildlife Trust or others.

Needs

Local community groups are often active in their locality and Watford has a number who are keen to see continued improvements in their community green spaces. There have been many successes, but there may well be many who do not have the confidence, the skills or capacity to work with the Council in delivering continued improvements to their green spaces.

Opportunities

Building on the successes to date (Goodwood Rec, Orchard Park, Cassiobury Park, Oxhey Park, Woodside Playing Fields, Harebreaks Wood), further opportunities exist to develop projects within other communities, whether a community tidy up or developing a masterplan for a green space and subsequent attraction of funding to deliver. The Council will continue to work with its partner Veolia as part of its ambition to see local communities more engaged within their open spaces.

6.3.10 Green Space Management, Maintenance and Development

Issue

Local people have indicated that they would like to see their green spaces continued to be managed and maintained to a high standard. There is also the concern that green space, whilst mainly of a high quality in relation to maintenance, as indicated by the quality audits, future long term development plans need to be considered in relation to infrastructure condition, long term use, and longer term investment plans. In 2013, the Council outsourced its Environmental Services functions to Veolia as part of a 7 year contract with a possible 8 year extension. This included the management, maintenance and development of all green spaces. They are and continue to be a key partner in the delivery of this Green Spaces Strategy.

Needs

Improving management, maintenance and development is not simply a matter of doing things differently, but generally also requires additional resources.

Opportunities

Some sites such as the several of the parks would benefit from involvement by teams of volunteers or *Park Champions*. However, there are obvious limits to the extent to which volunteers can deliver long term management and maintenance. The development of long term Management Plans or Development Plans for the Regional and Community Parks, with cost implications are an opportunity which would assist the Council and Veolia in gaining external funding for longer term investment. Twelve of the Council's parks have now benefitted from 5-year Management Plans as part of the wider Green Flag successes.

6.3.11 Staffing, Funding and Income Generation in Parks

Issues

In recent years, maintenance resources nationwide and locally have declined considerably in real terms and the Council is now faced with a significant reduction in its core funding due to the current economic climate and government austerity measures. Staffing in parks was reduced in 2011 and further reductions occurred in 2012/13. The outsourcing of the service to Veolia allowed a number of efficiencies to be made and increased to opportunity for retaining and improving quality but also to increase opportunities for income generation in parks.

Seven key areas have been identified where changes could be implemented:

1. Increasing the funding/resources available through alternative sources eg grant applications;
2. Partnering with commercial organisations through alternative delivery mechanisms eg catering;
3. Increasing income generation opportunities in parks eg car parking charges, events, lease agreements;
4. Developing self- management options;
5. Full cost recovery for some services provided;

6. Altering the management and maintenance regimes; and
7. Prioritising fewer sites.

Opportunities

Developer contributions from any future development proposals in the town may support further green space or facility enhancement or development but with the introduction of the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL), this is likely to be much more competitive and challenging with other infrastructure improvements seeking contributions. Income generation in parks and open spaces was very poor within Watford and there are considerable opportunities for franchises, improved leasing terms as well as charging for certain services. Many opportunities have been identified and many of these are progressing and include:-

- Car parking charges to Cassiobury Park;
- Improved lease agreements in Cassiobury Park;
- Increased income from events;
- Increases in charges for cemetery services; and
- Options for new services including a pet cemetery service.

6.4 Contributions to the Enhancement of Existing Provision

The need for the enhancement of existing provision arises when there will be a sufficient quantity of provision within the distance threshold of the development site after the development, but some elements of this provision may fail to meet the required quality standards.

The Council will seek developer contributions based on a Development Control Model using information available from the audit, provision and quality standards for off- site contributions based on the model below.

Whilst minimum quantitative, accessibility and qualitative standards need to be met in the provision of new green spaces or enhancement of existing ones, the design **quality** of a green space can make a major difference to whether or not a green space is successful and well used.

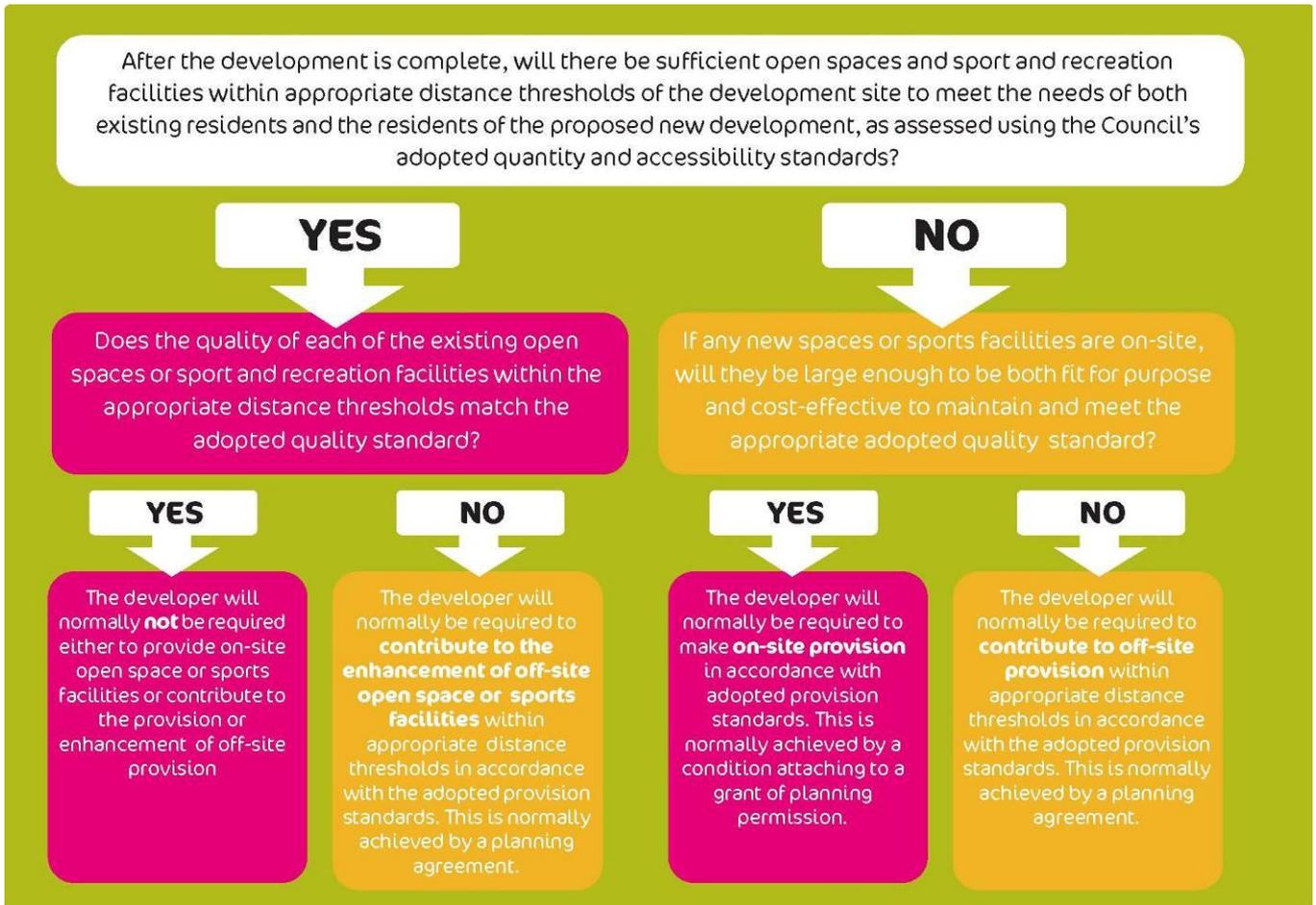


Figure 6.5 - Development Control Model

6.5 Performance Indicators - Measuring Progress

There have been a range of nationally recognised performance measurements provided by the previous Audit Commission that were applied to green spaces.

CABE Space had been advocating and promoting the outcomes and values of parks and open spaces (e.g. promoting satisfaction in place, providing a place for young people to participate in active recreations and empowering communities) rather than focusing on inputs (i.e. service delivery). However, Watford is keen to continue to use Green Flag as the key performance indicator for its parks and to build on current and continued successes.

6.5.1 Green Flag Awards

The Green Flag Award scheme was launched in 1996. It was designed to encourage good standards in parks and green spaces, recognise the diversity and what makes those sites special and recognise the value of the green spaces to the people who use them. The award is the benchmark by which the quality of green spaces is judged. The Tidy Britain Group use a steering group of national, public and voluntary sector organisations and informed individuals, to independently run the Green Flag Scheme. Two fairly later additions were the Green Pennant for sites managed by voluntary and community groups and the Green Heritage Site Award which is for sites of heritage value.

Watford at the adoption of this Green Spaces Strategy had 3 Green Flag parks. By 2019, we have 12 open spaces which are now at Green Flag standards. These are:-

- Cassiobury Park
- Woodside Playing Fields
- Cheslyn House and Gardens
- Oxhey Park
- North Watford Cemetery
- Goodwood Recreation Ground
- Harwoods Recreation Ground
- St Mary's Churchyard
- Waterfields Recreation Ground
- Callowland Recreation Ground
- Paddock Road Allotments
- North Watford Playing Fields (Orchard Park)

It is intended to further increase the number of Green Flag Parks in Watford and these could include:-

- Garston Park;
- River Colne Corridor;
- Watford Heath with Oxhey Grange Playing Fields;
- Harebreaks Recreation Ground;
- King George V Playing Fields; and
- Green Heritage for Cassiobury Park and Whippendell Wood.

6.6 Site Classification by Use - Grounds Maintenance Implications

6.6.1 Maintenance Standards

The current grounds maintenance regimes have different regimes in relation to different areas. Not all sites are treated equally e.g. Green Flag parks and gardens are generally maintained to a much higher standard in comparison to a local park. At the same time there are many similarities, for example, grass cutting has the same standard of maintenance regime in a Green Flag Park as it does in a local park. As highlighted, the standard of maintenance in Watford is generally high particularly within parks and gardens. There are, however significant pressures in relation to on-going budgetary issues and acceptable levels of maintenance standards need to be further investigated.

Research on maintenance standards will be carried out as an Action Plan of this strategy looking specifically at:

- Existing standards;
- Level of specification;

- Typology of open space;
- Development of Management Plans for all Regional and Community Parks and nature conservation sites;
- Service delivery;
- Alternative methods of service delivery; and
- Volunteer labour and use of reparation “labour” initiatives

This will enable the following:

- Improved management regimes, specific to the typology of use and local expectations. Links to management plans;
- Improved maintenance regimes, specific to the typology and local expectations;
- Clarification of standards of provision, for client, contractor and customers;
- Priorities for development, based on quality audits; and
- Community needs and aspirations.

6.7 Sustainable Design and Development

In order to support Watford’s vision to be a successful town in which people are proud to live, work, study and visit, it is important that the authority is able to maintain and sustain its physical infrastructure. For many years, new investments, due to a lack of consideration for its maintenance and sustainability requirements, have declined into a poor condition to be subsequently replaced again in later years. During the intervening years of decline, the image and liveability of the area becomes reduced, causing poor public perceptions of the area. The Council should move towards a “Sustain and Maintain Policy” and develop mechanisms where this is taken into account in all capital projects and planning decisions. This is a key role that should be developed by the Council whereby it will not take on any other management or maintenance “obligations” unless sustainability and maintenance have been approved and agreed.

6.8 Anti-Social Behaviour

CABE Space, November 2004, published an important Policy Note on ‘*Preventing Anti-Social Behaviour in Public Spaces*’. Research commissioned by CABE Space reveals that community groups estimate that 31% of parks suffer from unacceptably high levels of vandalism and behaviour related problems. Around 60% of local authorities are seen by these groups to have achieved very limited or practically no success in tackling the problem.

Solutions – CABE Space has seen two approaches emerge to the problem of anti-social behaviour in public spaces:

1. **“Target hardening”** – the redesign of facilities and equipment to make them near indestructible, and less susceptible to theft, vandalism and abuse;
2. **“Place making”** – investing in good design, attractive new facilities and good maintenance to create public spaces that the community will want to use and enjoy.

The evidence for place making – The CABE Space study showed that well designed, well maintained public spaces can contribute to reducing the incidence of vandalism and anti- social behaviour, and result in long term cost savings.

Approaches that work:

- Responding rapidly to problems such as vandalism by sending a clear message that abuse will not be tolerated;
- Supporting the Park Rangers and Environmental Crime Officers to reassure visitors while discouraging anti-social behaviour;
- Reasserting the clarity of design with open vistas and clear sight lines; and
- Fully engaging the community (including groups creating problems) in the process of reclaiming the park or open space.

So the benefits of investing in public space can be three-fold:

1. Successfully tackling problems of anti-social behaviour;
2. Achieving long term cost savings; and
3. Creating the neighbourhoods in which we want to live.

CABE Space recommended that:

- We should invest in the good design, staffing and maintenance of public spaces to tackle problems of anti-social behaviour, or to prevent the start of a downward spiral; and
- Security measures and target hardening should not be used as the only response to problems of anti-social behaviour in public space, but should be employed selectively where they will be effective, and as part of a co-ordinated approach.

The Council will develop Action Plans related to the issues of anti- social behaviour in parks and green spaces in accordance with CABE Space guidance.



Vicarage Road Cemetery

7 Action Plan and Progress - updated 2018

This Action Plan will enable Watford Borough Council and its partners through open space stewardship, to meet green space needs and provide a fair distribution of safe, accessible, clean, attractive green spaces, and achieve the strategic green space network. They are based on the 10 overarching policies, detailed in Section 6. Action Plans are however meant to be clear and concise and if possible, define outcomes and benefits, as well as being broadly achievable. There is an increased emphasis on partnership working. The Council is not able to deliver this without community support and stakeholder involvement. We have therefore developed an Action Plan that will need to be reviewed regularly. Watford Borough Council as the principal landowner and custodian of much of the open space will be a key player but we have identified “key partners” who will have important roles to play. This includes local communities who have already indicated support for the green space we currently have. The development of any Action Plan may also be seen as over ambitious and restrictive, when taking into account existing issues such as budget pressures, staffing, skills requirement and changing national priorities.

With this in mind, the Action Plan will need reviewing annually and at the “halfway point” as well as being flexible and with “stretched” targets, but with organisations who could be involved as well as strong leadership from the Council. As we have already stated, this Green Spaces Strategy is a document and delivery mechanism for many current service areas within the council (planning services, environmental services, legal and property services, buildings and projects) as well as a number of key stakeholders within the town. We propose to develop more detailed Project Plans for each defined action with more details highlighting requirements, funding issues, staffing resources, and timescales.

Key to Action Plans 8.1–8.4:

*Partners, stakeholders and community representatives (Who):

HMWT	- Herts and Middlesex Wildlife Trust
WBC	– Watford Borough Council
Ve	- Veolia
HE	– Historic England
SE	– Sport England
FG	– Friends Groups and Residents Associations
NHS	– NHS Trust
SC	– Sports Clubs
CRT	- Canal and River Trust
SLM	- SLM Leisure
HLNP	- Herts Local Nature Partnership
TCV	- The Conservation Volunteers

**Timescales:

Short Term (S)	– 5 years (up to 2018)	- Medium Term (M) 5-10 years (up to 2023)
Long Term (L)	– 10 years onwards	

7.1 Progress - Stewardship

ACTION	7.1.1 The Council and Partners will continue to enhance its green spaces based on an agreed investment strategy linked to the qualitative and value assessments, taking into account accessibility and local needs and further develop the strategic and local green space network
PROGRESS	<p>Parks Improvement Programme – completed 2013 (Oxhey Park, KGV Playing Fields, Callowland Rec, Waterfields Rec)</p> <p>Riverside Rec –completed 2015</p> <p>Watford Heath – completed 2015</p> <p>Play Area improvements Phase 3 – completed 2016</p> <p>St Mary’s Churchyard – completed 2016</p> <p>North Watford Playing Fields (Orchard Park) – completed 2016</p> <p>Q/V Audits – updated July 2018</p> <p>Allotment Investment Programme – completed 2016</p> <p>Garston Park – commences September 2019</p> <p>Oxhey Activity Park – commences July 2019</p> <p>Woodside Playing Fields – programmed 2020-23</p> <p>Tennis Court improvements – completed 2017</p> <p>15 Adult Gyms installed – completed 2017</p>
ACTION	7.1.2 The Council and partners will continue to enhance green spaces for the benefit of local biodiversity and enhancement of its green infrastructure and support the Hertfordshire Local Nature Partnership
PROGRESS	<p>Oxhey Park – capital improvements to the park with wildflower planting and improvements to the Dell;</p> <p>Callowland Rec – capital improvements to the park with wildflower planting;</p> <p>NWPF – significant improvements to the Dell with management of this area undertaken after capital improvements;</p> <p>Colne River Park – landscape improvements to the landscape corridor including riverside viewing area, accessibility improvements, conservation areas created;</p> <p>Waterfields Rec – football pitch removed and large area of wildlife conservation meadow area created with tree planting.</p> <p>Cassiobury Park – continued enhancements to the LNR and Cassiobury Park - New areas created as part of the HLF funded Parks for People project – eg Orchard Garden;</p> <p>Meriden Park – new wildlife conservation meadow created with tree planting as part of wider improvements;</p> <p>Lairage LNR – translocation of invertebrates to Lairage LNR as part of WHC project mitigation;</p> <p>River Colne Restoration – commenced 2019;</p> <p>Whippendell Wood – Grant applications submitted in 2018 for enhanced woodland management</p> <p>Wetland area enhancement in Cassiobury Park – commenced in 2019</p>

ACTION	7.1.3 The Council and partners will seek to tackle issues related to anti-social behaviour in green spaces in accordance with CABA Space guidance.
PROGRESS	Regular attendance at ASBAG by the Park Rangers; Continued liaison with WBC ASB Officer; Monitoring of ASB hotspots and passed to Veolia to react to; Safer Parks Project launched in 2018; Proactive works in relation to rough sleepers; Park Ranger enforcement powers being investigated in partnership with EH Byelaws to be updated in 2020
ACTION	7.1.4 The Council will review maintenance regimes, looking at standards, levels of specification in relation to typology of space and need for development of Management Plans for Community Parks.
PROGRESS	Management plans produced for:- <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cassiobury Park (Regional) – updated as part of HLF restoration and revised in 2018/19 with a new 10 year management plan • Woodside PF (Regional) –updated in 2017 • Cheslyn Gardens (Regional) –updated in 2017 • Oxhey Park (Community) – updated in 2017. • St Mary’s Churchyard (Community) – updated in 2017 • Callowland Rec (Community) – updated in 2017 • NWPF (Local) – updated in 2017 • Waterfields Rec (Local) – updated in 2017 • Goodwood Rec (Local) – updated in 2017 • Harwoods Rec (Local) – produced in 2017 • Paddock Road Allotments – updated in 2017 • North Watford Cemetery – updated in 2017 All the above are now Green Flag open spaces

7.2 Progress - Management

ACTION	7.2.1 The Council and partners will develop Management Plans for all existing Regional and Community parks based on a new three tier parks hierarchy and will involve local people, stakeholders as part of the process.
PROGRESS	Management plans produced for:-

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cassiobury Park (Regional) – updated as part of HLF restoration and revised in 2018 • Woodside PF (Regional) –updated in 2017 • Cheslyn Gardens (Regional) –updated in 2017 • Oxhey Park (Community) – updated in 2017. • St Mary’s Churchyard (Community) – updated in 2017 • Callowland Rec (Community) – updated in 2017 • NWPF (Local) – updated in 2017 • Waterfields Rec (Local) – updated in 2017 • Goodwood Rec (Local) – updated in 2017 • Harwoods Rec (Local) – produced in 2017 • Paddock Road Allotments – updated in 2017 • North Watford Cemetery – updated in 2017 <p>All the above are now Green Flag open spaces</p> <p>New management plans proposed for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Harebreaks Rec • Watford Heath & Oxhey Grange Playing Fields • KGV Playing Fields • River Colne Corridor • 5 Local Nature Reserves
ACTION	<p>7.2.2 The Council and partners will apply the principles of Green Flag for all Regional and Community parks and gardens/green spaces and apply for Green Flag for the spaces listed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❑ Garston Park – (programmed for 2019/20) ❑ River Colne Park ❑ Watford Heath & Oxhey Grange Playing Fields – (programmed for 2019/20) ❑ Harebreaks Rec ❑ KGV Playing Fields <p>and Green Heritage for:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❑ Cassiobury Park and Whippendell Wood – (programmed for 2020/21)
PROGRESS	<p>Continued applications for:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❑ 12 Green Flags now awarded

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❑ 4 more planned (subject to funding)
ACTION	7.2.3 The Council and partners will encourage more positive use and more activity in parks and gardens by encouraging local people to use them through programmes of activity, in particular in Cassiobury Park linked to the recently completed HLF restoration project.
PROGRESS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❑ Education & Community Officer appointed in 2015 in Cassiobury Park ❑ Events and Education Programme in Cassiobury Park ❑ Green Gym groups active in Cassiobury Park, Knutsford Playing Fields, Waterfields Rec and Garston Park ❑ Veolia managing Friends in Green Spaces ❑ Fun days to be programmed in community parks as an annual event – Garston Park 2018 and 2019
ACTION	7.2.4 Complete and update the spatial GIS mapping of parks and open spaces and highway verges across Watford, capturing all grounds maintenance activities accurately and update regularly
PROGRESS	<p>All parks and open spaces were captured onto GIS in 2012/13 including all categories including trees, shrubs, mowing regimes, structures etc. This is fully up to date.</p> <p>Capturing of trees and highway verges completed as per the agreement with HCC. Mapped on EzyTreev</p>
ACTION	7.2.5 The Council with partners will seek to develop and update sustainable management plans for all strategic natural and semi-natural green space sites, seeking to enhance their biodiversity value in terms of site size, links, habitats and management.
PROGRESS	Local Nature Reserve Management Plans to be updated in 2020-21
ACTION	7.2.6 The Council with its partners will develop a policy and strategy for trees in parks and streets as well as woodlands, linked to programmed management and mapping of trees in the town, mapped on an approved GIS / Tree management software.
PROGRESS	A Tree and Woodland Strategy completed by Veolia / WBC but yet to be adopted. Planned early 2020. Trees mapped with EzyTreev purchased by WBC and being managed by Veolia.
ACTION	7.2.7 The Council and partners will support the integration of natural and semi-natural green spaces into other forms of green space wherever possible.
PROGRESS	<p>Improvements already made in some green spaces:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❑ Garston Park – woodland planting to the LNR ❑ Waterfields Rec – woodland planting with conservation cut area incorporated ❑ Radlett Road Playing Fields – tree planting ❑ Meriden Park – woodland planting with conservation cut area incorporated

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❑ Oxhey Park - wildflower areas developed <p>Further improvements planned across a number of our parks and open spaces as part of a potential National Lottery Heritage Fund Project – “Wildspace! Watford”</p>
ACTION	7.2.8 The Council and local communities will continue to manage and maintain closed churchyards and cemeteries under its ownership / management for the benefit of local people and wildlife.
PROGRESS	Ongoing maintenance of St Mary’s Churchyard Recent adoption of All Saints Churchyard at Woodside. Our Heritage HLF application being developed in 2018 for delivery in 2019
ACTION	7.2.9 The Council will establish an annual capital programme for improvements to its Regional, Community and local parks and gardens as well as major semi-natural green space sites, to include play facilities, reviewed on a five yearly basis, based on the new strategic network.
PROGRESS	<p>The capital investment programme for improving parks has seen significant improvements since 2013 and is ongoing. Major improvements have included:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❑ Oxhey Park ❑ Callowland Rec ❑ Waterfields Rec ❑ KGV Playing Fields ❑ Colne River Park ❑ 20+ Play Areas ❑ Derby Road Skate park ❑ North Watford Cemetery ❑ Vicarage Road Cemetery Chapel surrounds ❑ Leavesden Green MUGA ❑ 15 Outdoor gyms ❑ Harwoods Adventurous Playground ❑ Harebreaks Adventurous Playground <p>Further capital investment is planned in 2018 – 23 at:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❑ Woodside Playing Fields ❑ Oxhey Activity Park

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❑ Garston Park ❑ North Watford Cemetery ❑ Vicarage Road Cemetery
ACTION	<p>7.2.10 The Council with partners, will maximise every opportunity in relation to grant funding to include the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❑ National Lottery Heritage Fund; ❑ Landfill Tax Credit Scheme; ❑ BIG Lottery; ❑ Sport England; ❑ Arts Council; ❑ Watford Community Housing ❑ Locality budgets
PROGRESS	<p>Successful application to the HLF / BIG for Cassiobury Park Restoration - £4.95 million; Grants awarded from WCHT for outdoor gyms - £75,000 and £40,000 for Meriden play area; Grants of £50,000 for Waterfields Rec from HCC and £100,000 towards Callowland MUGA. £10,000 from Lafarge for Callowland MUGA £5,000 from Groundwork towards NWPF £250,000 from Veolia Environmental Trust towards Oxhey Activity Park £40,000 from Forestry Commission for Whippendell Wood</p> <p>Applications submitted to: Water Environment Grant (500K) – River Colne improvements - unsuccessful Natural England (£50K) – Whippendell Wood improvements All Saints Churchyard - possible £100,000 grant application</p>
ACTION	<p>7.2.11 The Council will seek developer contributions (S106/CIL) based on a Development Control Model based on information available from the 'PPG17' audit, provision and quality standards for off-site contributions for all types of green space.</p>
PROGRESS	<p>Ongoing and S106/CIL awards managed by Development Control</p>

7.3 Progress - Use

ACTION	<p>7.3.1 The Council and other green space stakeholders will develop a 'Community Involvement Action Plan' to engage and</p>
---------------	---

	involve local communities through development of Friend's Groups in particular.
PROGRESS	Parks and Allotments Forums established and have been held in 2016, 2017, 2018
ACTION	7.3.2 The Council will develop, in partnership a system to develop volunteering opportunities on council managed green space, particularly in Cassiobury Park and natural green space corridors.
PROGRESS	Now delivered as part of the Activity Plan for the Parks for People Project for Cassiobury Park. 5 year delivery programme in Cassiobury including the extension of the Green Gym Project into Cassiobury which was initially established at Knutsford Playing Fields and now extended to Garston Park. Forest Schools established in Cassiobury Park and Alban Wood.
ACTION	7.3.3 The Council will work with health partners to investigate, assess and promote new ways of using green spaces to improve health and wellbeing, particularly Cassiobury Park. This will include investigating any possible funding opportunities.
PROGRESS	Green Gym operates in a number of our parks – further progress to be made. Park Run established in Cassiobury Park with nearly 500 runners weekly. Cycle schemes established
ACTION	7.3.4 The Council will develop publicity material to publicise both strategic green space sites to all sectors of the community who need improved access to information on their local green spaces.
PROGRESS	Watford – A Guide to its Parks and Open Spaces published in 2017 and available widely. Website updated regularly. Cassiobury Park has its own FB page and further social media opportunities being developed. All Watford parks now on www.parksherts.co.uk
ACTION	7.3.5 The Council will consult and involve local communities on green space issues and developments to include the following in line with the Council's Strategy for Community Engagement and Consultation. These will include : <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Children; <input type="checkbox"/> Older People; <input type="checkbox"/> People with Disabilities; <input type="checkbox"/> Carers; <input type="checkbox"/> People with Learning Difficulties; <input type="checkbox"/> Black and Minority Ethnic groups; and <input type="checkbox"/> Other excluded groups.
PROGRESS	Consultation is ongoing with all development projects and is included as part of the process. This included significant projects such as Cassiobury Park restoration, the Sports Facilities Strategy development to the relocation of the Gaelic Football Club – to the re-design of small play areas. Wider consultation will be carried out with all allotment tenants in 2019.
ACTION	7.3.6 The Council will make “access for all” an integral part of all policy, strategy and activity in the planning development and management of Watford's green spaces in line with the 'BT Countryside for All' standards and their accompanying approach as

	an integral part of any physical access policy.
PROGRESS	<p>Recent improvements to parks have ensured “access for all” is integrated into the re-design of open spaces.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❑ Oxhey Park – new footpaths, steps, seating ❑ Waterfield Rec – new footpaths, steps, seating ❑ Cemetery works – improvements to chapel surrounds ❑ Meriden Play Area – play equipment dedicated to children with more severe disabilities ❑ Play area improvements – improved access, surfacing, seating, in particular Cassiobury Park ❑ Adult gyms – older users catered for. <p>In 2018, a play audit was carried out in relation to accessibility of all WBC play areas. Improvements are planned from 2019 onwards where opportunities exist.</p>
ACTION	7.3.7 The Council with partners will improve the network of green corridors within Watford based on Green Infrastructure principles and continue to improve the links and access to other green spaces in developing the strategic network through working in partnership.
PROGRESS	<p>Progress has been considerable with ongoing improvements to a number of green corridors highlighted in the GI Strategy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❑ Colne River Park improvements – access / open space improvements to Knutsford Playing Fields / Radlett Road Playing Fields and Waterfield Rec – ongoing ❑ Cassiobury Park / Whippendell Wood – as part of the Parks for People Project funded by HLF / BIG <p>The River Colne Restoration project will provide further opportunities to improve green infrastructure in the town. A River Colne Strategy will identify a number of projects along here.</p>
ACTION	7.3.8 The Council will seek to ensure that all regional and community parks will have at least a destination play facility and, if appropriate, a youth facility, all retained as high quality and of high value to the local community.
PROGRESS	<p>From 2019, a further round of play area improvements are planned which will seek to enhance the value to the local community through enhancements to play experiences as well as for older children.</p> <p>Harwoods and Harebreaks Recreation Grounds have significant destination play facilities and opened in 2017.</p>
ACTION	7.3.9 The Council, with key partners will improve its network of play areas and play spaces in particular developing a more strategic overview of sites, with less emphasis on smaller equipped Local Areas of Play (LAP) and a greater focus on neighbourhood facilities offering greater play value.
PROGRESS	20 play areas improved over last 5 years – ongoing. 6 play areas were improved in 2014.

	Audit of play areas carried out in 2018 which reviewed play value and accessibility. New play investment programme from 2019 onwards.
ACTION	7.3.10 The Council will seek funding and support the long term plans for the development of sports provision and facilities throughout the town based on a new Sports Facilities Strategy to be based on recommendations from the Sports Facilities Study carried out in 2012. This will include recommendations for developing strategic multi activity sports hubs.
PROGRESS	Draft Sports Facilities Strategy presented to Cabinet (1/9/14) seeking approval to consult widely with local and wider community. Strategy adopted and progress has included the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Oxhey Activity Park with new skate park and BMX track linked to new café – proposed delivery 2020 : £4 million <input type="checkbox"/> Relocation of the Gaelic Football Club to Radlett Road : £1.4 million <input type="checkbox"/> Development of Masterplan and Feasibility Study for Woodside Playing Fields : £9.2 million project proposed <input type="checkbox"/> Funding of new sports facilities at Meriden Community Centre <input type="checkbox"/> Funding of new clubhouse facilities at Fullerians RFC <input type="checkbox"/> Funding of 2nd pitch at Watford RFC <input type="checkbox"/> Improvements to Herons FC
ACTION	7.3.11 The Council will implement a system of sampling user numbers in key locations and times, in particular at Cassiobury Park, Woodside Playing Fields and Cheslyn House and Gardens.
PROGRESS	People counters were installed in Cassiobury Park in May 2013 as part of the requirement to assess numbers entering and using the park. The outcome was an accurate picture of numbers to the park per year – 2.15 million visits per year. Further works to be progressed.
ACTION	7.3.12 The Council will continue to measure and report customer satisfaction levels in parks and open spaces.
PROGRESS	Carried out every year – satisfaction rates remain very high
ACTION	7.3.13 The Council will identify further partnerships to assist in delivery of parks management, maintenance and development including frameworks for landscape contractors, play providers and landscape / green space consultants.
PROGRESS	Excellent relationships built up and established with a number of consultants and contractors
ACTION	7.3.14 The Council will work with allotment tenants in developing and improving allotment sites across the town, seeking external funding if possible and seeking to develop self-management opportunities as well as to establish models of best practice used elsewhere as outlined in the Action Plans in the 2013 - 2018 Allotment Strategy.

PROGRESS	<p>Significant progress has been made. The Allotment investment programme commenced in July 2014 and was completed in November 2014. The £810,000 investment has ensured 10 sites were improved with new fences, water provision, toilets, signboards etc.</p> <p>Self-management was attempted at Callowland allotments but did not succeed due to internal differences among the management committee. Further attempts were made at Oxhey Grange and Paddock Road but no desire from tenants to move to self-management.</p> <p>No further progress will be made on self-management. Paddock Road allotments is now Green Flag. A new allotments strategy has been developed in 2019 after a new survey was carried out of tenants in 2019</p>
ACTION	7.3.15 The Council will work in partnership with allotment tenants to promote allotment gardening across Watford as outlined in the Action Plans in the 2013 - 2018 Allotment Strategy.
PROGRESS	No progress
ACTION	7.3.16 The Council with local stakeholders, will aim to work with local schools and colleges more closely to achieve shared community goals and maximise the community use of school facilities where appropriate.
PROGRESS	No progress
ACTION	7.3.17 The Council will form a project team and commission a feasibility study for the long term development of Woodside Playing Fields, including Watford Town Cricket Club and Stadium, based on the outcome of the Sports Facilities Study carried out in 2012.
PROGRESS	<p>A Masterplan and Feasibility Study commissioned in 2018 and progress will be made in 2019 in delivering a significant project including:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> New Cricket Club Pavilion <input type="checkbox"/> Restored stable block <input type="checkbox"/> Adventure play <input type="checkbox"/> High ropes facility <input type="checkbox"/> Adventurous golf <input type="checkbox"/> Café facilities <input type="checkbox"/> Increased parking

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❑ Options developed for the Indoor Bowls Facility <p>Project now has a working budget of £9.2 million</p>
ACTION	7.3.18 The Council will deliver a Round 2 HLF Parks for People application for Cassiobury Park and on success, deliver and implement the £6.5 million restoration project.
PROGRESS	Completed in July 2017 Multi - Award winning restoration project
ACTION	7.3.19 The Council will continue its promotion of parks and open spaces through signage improvement programme, noticeboards, leaflets, way-marked walks and interpretation boards. Update existing website for parks and open spaces.
PROGRESS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❑ New signage to all parks completed; ❑ Parks and Open Spaces booklet completed ❑ Parks Herts website implemented ❑ Website updated <p>Walks and routes to be developed further</p>
ACTION	7.3.20 The Council develop fitness trails and outdoor gyms at specific sites throughout Watford.
PROGRESS	<p>Outdoor gyms successfully installed at the following locations:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❑ Woodside Playing Fields ❑ Lea Farm Rec ❑ Leavesden Green Rec ❑ Garston Park ❑ Harebreaks Rec ❑ Harwoods Rec ❑ Callowland Rec ❑ Oxhey Park ❑ Knutsford Playing Fields ❑ KGV Playing Fields ❑ Cassiobury Park x2 ❑ Riverside Rec
ACTION	7.3.21 The Council will continue to develop the Colne River Project and to extend the boundaries to the upper areas of the

	River Colne and seek funding to deliver further improvements
PROGRESS	<p>Significant progress to date including:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❑ Landscape improvements to Knutsford Playing Fields ❑ Landscape improvements to Waterfield Rec ❑ Landscape improvements to Radlett Road Playing Fields <p>A further project is being developed to enhance the River Corridor from 2019 and will form a 10 year project. Water Environment Grant applied for in 2018. Unsuccessful. Groundwork and ColneCan appointed to develop river restoration plans from 2019 - 2023</p>
ACTION	7.3.22 The Council will develop a consistent and agreed policy on fees and charges for events and commercial ventures in parks and open spaces
PROGRESS	<p>Linked to Watford 2020 and emerging commercial strategy, with proposals on:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❑ Car Parking charges in Cassiobury Park ❑ Events in parks ❑ Cemetery project eg Pet Cemetery
ACTION	7.3.23 The Council will update and amend all parks and open spaces bylaws to ensure they are suitable for current and existing park usage.
PROGRESS	This will be progressed in 2020
ACTION	7.3.24 The Council will consider and explore opportunities for extreme sports facilities in Watford, in particular introduce a BMX facility in an agreed location.
PROGRESS	A new BMX Track and skate park is being developed in 2019-2020 in Oxhey Park

7.4 Progress - Environmental Protection

ACTION	7.4.1 The Council will continue to seek developer contributions through Section 106 / CIL agreements to improve green spaces within Watford
PROGRESS	Ongoing

ACTION	7.4.3 The Council will review those spaces classed as being of genuinely low quality and low value in the light of wider planning policies, but taking account of accessibility, quality and value of alternative provision in the area and the resources available to the Council.
PROGRESS	All sites were re-scored in 2018
ACTION	7.4.4 The Council will adopt more sustainable planting and maintenance practices, to inc. minimising inputs of non-renewable resources, pesticides and herbicides and to develop a programme for controlling invasive species.
PROGRESS	To progress





For further information please contact:

Watford Borough Council
Corporate Strategy and Client Services
Town Hall
Watford
WD17 3EX

clientservices@watford.gov.uk

Part A

Report to: Cabinet

Date of meeting: Monday, 2 March 2020

Report author: Head of Parks, Heritage and Culture

Title: A Tree and Woodland Management Strategy for Watford

1.0 Summary

1.1 In line with the Council's adopted Green Spaces Strategy 2013-2023, the Council, in association with Veolia have drafted a Tree and Woodland Management Strategy to assist the council in how it maintains, improves and increases its current stock of trees. Watford's trees within parks, woods, open spaces and the many tree-lined streets form an important component of our landscape, linking the urban area with the surrounding countryside and contribute to the town's long-term sustainability. They provide many benefits to people's wellbeing and for enhancing the quality of life in many ways including environmental, economic, social, amenity, healthy living, and biodiversity. This 10 year Management Strategy has been developed after consultation with stakeholders and partners and will give greater clarity to those responsible for our tree stock.

2.0 Risks

2.1 There are no defined risks identified.

3.0 Recommendations

3.1 To note the contents of the report

3.2 To formally adopt the strategy

Further information:

Paul Rabbitts

paul.rabbitts@watford.gov.uk

Report approved by: Alan Gough - Group Head of Service for Environmental and Community Services

4.0 Detailed proposal

4.1 A Vision was developed as part of the process in developing this management strategy which was:-

“To ensure that Watford’s trees and woodlands are well planted, maintained, protected and managed in line with best arboricultural practice, to help create a more attractive, sustainable and healthy place to live, work and visit and critically taking into consideration, conservation, wildlife and the impact of climate change”.

This strategy is underpinned by the council’s Green Spaces Strategy (2013-2023) in creating a network of accessible, high quality and highly valued green spaces to enhance the quality of life for local communities in Watford and creating a more attractive, healthy place to live and work and visit. It also supports Watford Borough Council’s Corporate Policies.

The council is currently responsible for approximately 10,500 trees that are located on:

- Highway verges and street
- Parks and public open spaces; and
- Cemeteries and churchyards.

In addition, the council manages thousands of trees across 506 hectares of public open space including the woodlands of Whippendell Wood, Harebreaks Wood, Albans Wood and woodland areas in Oxhey Park, and Orchard Park.

Tree and woodland canopy cover is defined as the area of leaves, branches, and stems of trees covering the ground when viewed from above, is 18.2% across the borough against the average tree canopy cover figure of 16% in England.

Whippendell Wood accounts for a large percentage of this cover but opportunities exist in the town for increasing this cover in other parts of the town, including parks and playing fields. A bold and progressive ambition would be to increase cover to 20%.

4.2 The council’s trees are managed by Veolia as part of the Parks and Open Spaces maintenance contract and a Service Level Agreement with Hertfordshire County Council. The ownership of trees brings certain legal responsibilities and obligations as to how they should be managed. Watford Borough Council seeks to be a good and responsible manager of trees, to fulfil its duty of care by delivering a programme of tree management aimed at keeping the public and property safe from harm, and by preserving the health and future sustainability of its tree stock.

4.3 The purpose of this strategy is therefore to strengthen our role, clarify our responsibilities and ensure good, consistent practice with regards to tree management. The strategy has identified a number of actions that we will be taking forward over the next 10 years.

4.4 Engagement and consultation was undertaken with a number of stakeholders including Herts and Middlesex Wildlife Trust, Natural England, The Friends of

Cassiobury Park as well as other local Friends Groups. Although feedback was limited, it was positive and all comments were included.

5.0 **Implications**

5.1 **Financial**

5.1.1 The Shared Director of Finance comments that there are no new financial implications in the report, however any additional costs that are not currently contained in existing budgets will require growth bids as part of the budget process.

5.2 **Legal Issues (Monitoring Officer)**

5.2.1 The Group Head of Democracy and Governance comments that the legal implications are contained within the Strategy.

5.3 **Equalities, Human Rights and Data Protection**

5.3.1 Having had regard to the council's obligations under s149, it is considered equalities and human rights are not affected.

Having had regard to the council's obligations under the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) 2018, it is considered that officers are not required to undertake a Data Processing Impact Assessment (DPIA) for this report.

5.4 **Staffing**

5.4.1 Not applicable

5.5 **Accommodation**

5.5.1 Not applicable

5.6 **Community Safety/Crime and Disorder**

5.6.1 The action plan includes regular safety inspections in line with the council's duty of care.

5.7 **Sustainability**

5.7.1 The adoption of a strategy to manage our trees and woodlands adds to the Council's wider sustainability agenda and Climate Change Emergency. The importance of retaining, managing and increasing our tree cover is essential to this wider agenda.

Appendices

- Appendix 1 – Tree and Woodland Management Strategy

Background papers

No papers were used in the preparation of this report.

A Tree and Woodland Strategy for Watford 2020-2030



Contents

- 1 A Vision for Watford**
- 2 The benefits of trees to Watford**
- 3 Watford's tree and woodland resource**
- 4 Trees in Council ownership**
 - **Street trees**
 - **Park trees**
 - **Cemeteries and churchyards**
 - **Woodlands**
 - **Hedgerows**
- 5 Trees in private ownership**
- 6 Actions**
- 7 Implementation, monitoring and review**



1. A Vision for Watford

“To ensure that Watford’s trees and woodlands are well planted, maintained, protected and managed in line with best arboricultural practice, to help create a more attractive, sustainable and healthy place to live, work and visit”.

This strategy is underpinned by the council’s Green Spaces Strategy (2013-2023) in creating a network of accessible, high quality and highly valued green spaces to enhance the quality of life for local communities in Watford and creating a more attractive, healthy place to live and work and visit. It also supports Watford Borough Council’s Corporate Policies:

The Council’s Vision – “To Create a Bold and Progressive Future for Watford”

Our vision reflects our approach to the current challenges and opportunities facing the Council as an organisation and the town as a place to live, work, visit and study. We want to champion our town so that it is a place where all our communities thrive and prosper, benefitting from strong economic growth and good quality local services and facilities. This will require the Council to be innovative, explore new ways of working and champion initiatives that will transform the town and the organisation. More of the same isn’t going to secure the future we want for Watford, which is why bold and progressive lie at the heart of our ambitions.

Supporting this vision, the Council has 5 priority areas of work which are critical to the Council achieving successful outcomes for its ambitions for the town.

1. Identify ways to manage the borough’s housing needs;
2. Champion smart growth and economic prosperity;
3. Provide for our vulnerable and disadvantaged communities;
4. Deliver a digital Watford to empower our community; and
5. Secure our own financial future.

In addition, our core, day to day business underpins everything we do and all of our work and effort must contribute to our success. In particular, we recognise the importance of 3 key areas in making us an effective organisation, in touch with our residents and delivering in the areas and in a way that they expect. These are:

- Effective two-way engagement and communication;
- Sound management and high performance; and
- Improving the town’s environment.

This document therefore details the strategy for the enhancement of our trees and woodlands over the 2020 to 2030 period and how we continue to manage them to provide a cleaner, greener Watford which is conducive to improving the working, residential and leisure environment of the town.



2. The Benefits of Trees to Watford

Watford's trees within parks, woods, open spaces and the many tree-lined streets form an important component of our landscape, linking the urban area with the surrounding countryside and contribute to long-term sustainability. They provide many benefits to people's wellbeing and for enhancing the quality of life in the following ways:

A. Environmental

- Trees have a positive impact on mitigating the effects of climate change (7);
- Trees help improve air quality by absorbing pollutants such as ozone, nitrogen oxide, sulphur dioxide and carbon monoxide. Dust and other particulates are trapped by leaves, making the air healthier to breathe and minimising health risks (1);
- Over a single year, a mature tree removes about 22kg of carbon dioxide from the atmosphere (2);
- They reduce the "urban heat island effect" of localised extremes of temperature by absorbing radiation which would otherwise be stored and emitted by buildings and highways, leading to towns having a higher temperature than surrounding countryside (3);
- Trees can play an important part in water management, including safeguarding water quality and contributing to flood alleviation as part of Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (4). Tree canopies intercept rainwater, helping to prevent localised flooding during flash floods (1);
- By screening traffic, trees can reduce noise pollution adjacent to busy roads (5); and
- They provide a habitat for supporting local wildlife throughout the Borough and green corridors for wildlife migration (6).

B. Economic

- The presence of tree lined streets, green corridors and open, green spaces can enhance property values, adding a premium to house prices of 5-17% (8);
- Tree planting can improve the appearance of vacant development, derelict or underused land providing valuable screening and creating an attractive place in which people want to live, work and invest (9);
- Office workers who have views of trees feel happier, aiding increased performance (10); and
- Trees help to create attractive, welcoming areas within our town centres, encouraging people to visit and stay for longer, spending more at shops and restaurants (11).

C. Social and Amenity

- Planting and caring for trees bring people together, strengthening communities and increasing their sense of ownership of surroundings (7);
- Trees make public spaces and developed areas more appealing, giving variety

- of scale, form, colour and shape (1);
- Trees can make inspiring outdoor classrooms and provide an educational resource for our Forest Schools Programmes in Watford;
- They can be important local landmarks and make neighbourhood more distinctive and provide cultural and historical links (1); and
- They soften/hide the impact of buildings and other structures in a densely populated urban environment;

D. Healthy living

- Trees and woodlands are known to calm people, relieve stress and provide a spiritual value that supports improved mental health and wellbeing (12);
- Office workers and residents who have views of trees feel happier;
- A view of trees has been known to speed up recovery from surgery (13); and
- Children living in areas with more street trees have lower prevalence of asthma (14) due to the cleaner air.

E. Biodiversity

- A tree-rich landscape can increase biodiversity and bring more varied wildlife close to where people live and work (7);
- Trees are an important habitat for local wildlife across the borough providing nesting and foraging opportunities. A mature oak can host up to 5,000 different species of invertebrate that supports other birds and mammals (15);
- Woodlands are our richest wildlife habitats and often contain the greatest numbers as well as many of our rarest and most threatened species. They are important for most forms of wildlife, from trees and shrubs to mosses, lichens and fungi, and from mammals and birds to beetles, slugs and moths (16);
- Hedgerows and lines of trees are important for connecting greenspace, creating important green infrastructure links, and allowing wildlife commuting routes between sites, providing shelter, breeding and feeding places for many animals (17). Hedgerows over 1m in height are important habitats for most bat species, especially where they create a double linear feature with hedgerow, treeline or woodland (18); and
- Veteran trees have great conservation value as individual trees and are important because of their size, age or condition; they will have developed lots of niches that wildlife will settle into such as cavities for bats and birds, and decaying wood for invertebrates (19).

Sources

National Urban Forestry Unit (2005) Trees Matter: bringing lasting benefits to people in towns. (2) Broadmeadow, M and Matthews R (2003) Forests, Carbon and Climate Change: the UK Contribution. (3) Forest Commission (2013) Research Note: Air temperature regulation by urban trees and green infrastructure. (4) The Woodland Trust (2012) Trees in our towns How integrating trees into our towns and cities can improve water quality, help mitigate flooding and benefit society. (5) . 'Assessing the Benefits and Costs of the Urban Forest, Dwyer JF, McPherson EG, Schroeder HW & Rowntree R, Journal of Arboriculture 18 (5), pp227-234, 1992; 'Identified Benefits of Community Trees and Forests', Coder KD, University of Georgia Cooperative Extension Service – Forest Resources Publication FOR96-39, 1996. (6) A Biodiversity Plan for Hertfordshire (2006) chapter 4 woodland. (7) National Urban Forestry Unit (1999) Trees & Woods in towns and cities: How to develop local strategies for urban forestry. (8) 15. CABE Space (2005) Does money grow on trees? (9) National Urban Forestry Unit (2004) Interim greening of vacant development land (10) Kaplan R (1993) The role of Nature in the workplace. (11) Wolf, K (1999) Trees in Business Districts: Positive Effects on Consumer Behaviour, University of Washington College of Forest Resources, Factsheet 30. (12) Kuo F and Sullivan W (2001) Aggression and Violence in the Inner City: Effects of Environment via Mental Fatigue, Environment and Behaviour 33 (4), pp543-571. (13) Ulrich RS (1984) Science Journal 224, pp420-421, 1984. (14) Lovasi GS, Quinn JW, Neckerman KM, Perzanowski MS, Rundle A. (2007), Journal of Epidemiology and Community Health 62(7): pp647-9. (15) Fuller RJ (1995) Bird life of woodland and forest, Cambridge University Press. (16) Hertfordshire Environmental Forum (2006) A Biodiversity Action Plan for Hertfordshire, Chapter 4: Woodland, 4.1-4.32. (17) Hedgelink website (2018) About hedgerows: hedgerow biodiversity. (18) Russ and Montgomery (2002) Habitat associations of bats in Northern Ireland: Implications for conservation. (19) Woodland Trust (2018) website. Ancient trees: what is an ancient tree?



3. Watford's Tree and Woodland Resource

Tree and woodland cover

The council is currently responsible for approximately 10,500 trees that are located on:

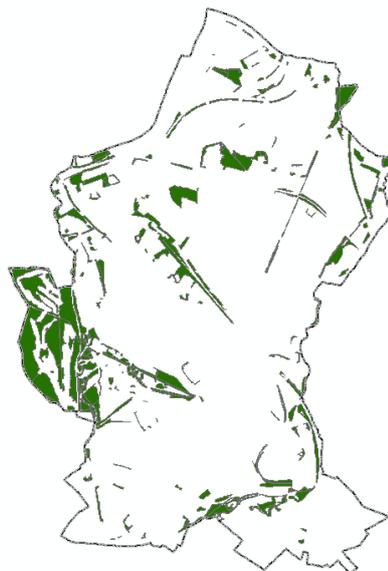
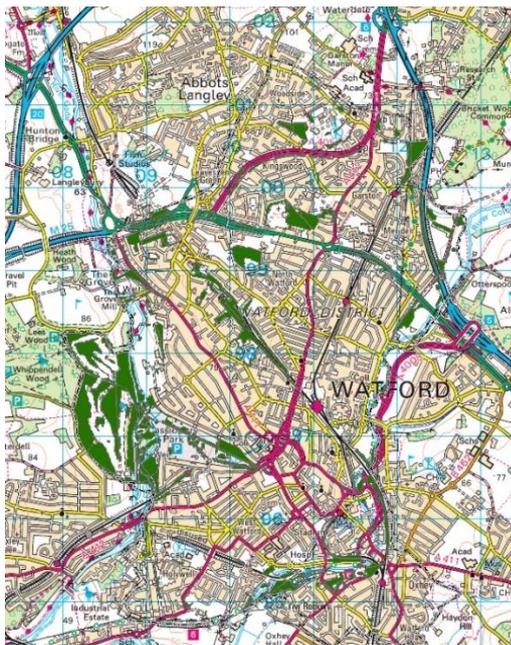
- Highway verges and street (as part of a service level agreement with Hertfordshire County Council);
- Parks and public open spaces; and
- Cemeteries and churchyards.

In addition, the council manages thousands of trees across 506 hectares of public open space including the woodlands of Whippendell Wood, Harebreaks Wood, Albans Wood and woodland areas in Oxhey Park, and Orchard Park.

Tree and woodland canopy cover is defined as the area of leaves, branches, and stems of trees covering the ground when viewed from above, is 18.2% across the borough against the average tree canopy cover figure of 16% in England. Whippendell Wood accounts for a large percentage of this cover but opportunities exist in the town for increasing this cover in other parts of the town, including parks and playing fields. A bold and progressive ambition would be to increase cover to 20%.

The value of Watford's tree and woodland resource

Currently we have no true value of Watford's tree stock, although we can acknowledge the benefits they bring to people's wellbeing and quality of life as documented in the research in section two. The ability to value the individual and collective tree stock will help us in terms of allocation of resources and will provide an essential management tool to protect our assets and also seek compensation from any external organisation responsible for damaging or removing any council-owned or protected tree. There are several tree valuation methods available, the leading one being the Capital Asset Valuation of Amenity Trees (CAVAT) developed in partnership with London Tree Officers Association (LTOA).



A map of Watford indicating woodlands and tree cover (2) This does not include Whippendell Wood as this is a WBC site but in Three Rivers District.

Actions

1. Maintain and update the EzyTreev database and develop a system so information can be shared easily with council departments
2. Use a recognised tree valuation system to place a value on individual trees and through this a value on the entire local authority and county council owned tree population in Watford
3. Undertake regular safety inspections of all local authority and county council trees at a frequency based on the graded analysis of threat to the public covering perceived target area, frequency of public use and appreciation of duty of care
4. Ensure training to keep tree managers up to date with good arboricultural management practices

4. Trees in Council Ownership

The council's trees are managed by Veolia as part of the Parks and Open Spaces maintenance contract and a Service Level Agreement with Hertfordshire County Council. The ownership of trees brings certain legal responsibilities and obligations as to how they should be managed. Watford Borough Council seeks to be a good and responsible manager of trees, to fulfil its duty of care by delivering a programme of tree management aimed at keeping the public and property safe from harm, and by preserving the health and future sustainability of its tree stock.

Legal

Tree inspection programme

Under the Occupiers Liability Act (57 & 84) the council has a duty of care to make sure it has taken reasonable steps to minimise the health and safety risks resulting from trees under its management. The Council undertakes a robust tree inspection programme on a three-year cycle to identify dead, dying and diseased trees that are within its ownership and responsibility. Once trees have been surveyed, the data is held on Ezytreev, a tree management programme used by the Council and its contractors. The work is prioritised, in an emergency situation which poses a high risk to people or property, instruction will be given to our tree contractor to make the tree safe as soon as possible, less urgent works are scheduled for three-month, six-month or one-year programme based on precedence.

The statutory obligation to manage all the trees that we own and trees within areas of our control also relates to the following:

- Highways Act 1980;
- Occupiers' Liability Act 1957 & 1984;
- The New Roads and Streetworks Act 1991;
- Health and Safety at Work Act 1974;
- Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 including the Sites of Special Scientific Interest (Appeals) Regulations 2009;
- The Town and Country Planning Act 1990; and
- Tree Preservation Order (TPO) process.

There is a wide range of common law cases which has helped shaped the legal boundaries for tree law which the Council uses to inform policy and practice.

Street trees

Watford has a street tree population of **5230** trees which are an integral part of the urban landscape and valued by residents for contributing to a greener and more sustainable environment to live, work and visit. There are a variety of tree species of different ages. The top five tree species planted in Watford are *Acer* (*Sycamore*) (20%), *Sorbus* (*Rowan and Whitebeam*) (17%), *Prunus* (*Cherry*) (14%), *Crataegus* (*Hawthorn*) (5.6%), *Tilia* (*Lime*) (5.5 %). The most unusual species planted include Eucalyptus, Indian Bean Tree, Tulip Tree, Dawn Redwood, Swamp Cypress, Wild Service Tree and a number of Giant Redwood.

Large numbers of trees were planted in the Victorian and Edwardian era, so we now face a population of over-mature street trees. Increasingly these trees are becoming diseased or are dying, are vulnerable to climatic variations, and need maintenance or removal.

The roadside environment is a difficult place for trees to become established and survive. There is often intense pressure for space from underground services, poor soil, pollution from emissions, road salt, and vandalism.



The main issues Watford faces:

With any population of street trees there are several management challenges:

- Increased costs of inspecting and maintaining trees, specifically the high numbers of old trees and declining populations;
- Increased pressures to remove old trees due to an increased risk to the public;
- Lack of an integrated database and mapping system of trees that all council departments can access easily;
- Replacement tree planting with smaller trees is reducing the canopy cover and reducing the valuable services that street trees perform in Watford;
- Limited budget resources for replacement planting and maintenance to successfully establish young trees;
- No financial value of Watford's trees is known so therefore no compensation value for trees lost to development can be calculated; and
- Protecting healthy trees from unnecessary damage or felling.

Street tree removal

Generally, the council will not take any action to remove a healthy tree in response to complaints or requests from residents unless it is deemed necessary to do so. These circumstances would be if trees are dead, dying or diseased or can be proven to be linked to damage caused to buildings, footways and other structures. The Council reserves the right to refuse felling or potentially disfiguring forms of tree work in order to reduce the amount of shade being cast or to improve the reception of television signals, for CCTV operations, to reduce leaf and seed fall, aphid or bird droppings etc. These are not reasons to justify the removal of a healthy tree which are regarded as a community asset. The views of all residents in the immediate area will be considered before a decision is reached.

Vehicle Crossovers

Increasing demands for off-street parking has led to more public requests for the construction of new vehicle crossovers. The Council will not agree to the removal of healthy, established trees for the construction of new crossovers except in extenuating circumstances where the outcome is supported by good arboricultural practice.

Tree pruning

With any population of trees there are several common sources of complaint. Most tree problems can be mitigated with careful pruning once the tree is established.

The Council will endeavour to investigate such concerns using a strict criterion to deem if pruning is necessary and will take appropriate action to prevent further damage or liability to the council. We will only prune our trees for the following reasons:

- To prevent vehicle damage and personal injury from obscured sightlines on the highway and for the purposes of public safety;
- To prevent blocking street lighting, road signs or traffic lights;
- To abate an actionable nuisance;

- To mitigate the risks to the council; and
- Where remedial works are advantageous to maintaining our tree stock to preserve their amenity, conservation, and environmental value.

We will not prune trees for the following reasons:-

- To reduce leaf/seed fall, sap, aphid or bird droppings;
- Because they are blocking light;
- To improve television reception;
- Because they are swaying in the wind; and
- We can refuse requests for other reasons.

Subsidence

A common concern for homeowners is the potential for structural damage caused by tree roots. This is caused by the roots removing some moisture from clay-based soils which can cause shrinkage. We have a relatively low occurrence of this source of subsidence as the soil in Watford tends not to be the shrinkable clay associated with this issue. The onus is on the owner of a property to prove a tree is an effective cause of subsidence damage.

Street tree planting

The council is committed to planting new trees and to finding new and suitable sites. Where a tree is lost, it will be replaced unless there are good reasons not to do so. The Arboriculture Officer will recommend suitable and appropriate tree species for planting in streets and urban areas.

Tree works on council land

With the exception of tree work adjacent to electric cables (electric line clearance) all tree work undertaken on council land will be carried out by WBC tree contractors following best arboricultural practice as set out in British Standards 3998:2010 They are required to provide a method statement outlining their health and safety procedures, insurance, and risk assessment for the work to be undertaken, and must comply with all relevant British Standards. A robust monitoring system of contracted work is in place to ensure good value for money, compliance and best practice.

Trees and construction

Where construction works affect street trees, the council will work with those responsible in construction activity to ensure compliance with British Standard 5837:2012 for tree protection during the course of works. We will seek compensation from any external organisation responsible for damaging or removing any council-owned or protected tree.

Trees and the planning system

Under the UK planning system, the council has a statutory duty to consider the protection and planting of trees when granting planning permission for development. The effect of development on trees, whether protected (e.g. by a TPO or Conservation Area) or not, is a material consideration when making decisions on planning applications.

Utility work and root zones

Works to the highways, service routes and street furniture are essential but can have a detrimental effect on Watford's tree stock if not managed carefully as work often requires excavation within or near the tree root zones. It is important that all work for utilities services affecting trees will be undertaken in accordance with the guidelines and standards set out by the National Joint Utilities Group.

Damage to council trees

Watford's trees are an important asset and we will seek to prosecute anyone found to be damaging or pruning its trees without permission or disposing of tree waste illegally, and where appropriate apply the maximum penalty. Any private individual or external organisation that undertakes actions to damage or remove council owned or protected trees will be pursued for compensation for the full amenity value of the tree based on CAVAT or similar tree evaluation system.

Actions

- 5.** Review and update tree works specifications to recognise current standards and best practice with a vigorous monitoring system in place to ensure contractors adhere to this and that council tree stock is protected against avoidable damage
- 6.** Ensure all development and construction work impacting on trees comply with the recommendations of BS 5837 Trees in Relation to Construction
- 7.** Develop an approved list of trees for highways and parks ensuring that new trees can contribute to biodiversity and seek opportunities for large canopy cover trees
- 8.** Ensure all work for utility services affecting trees will be undertaken in accordance with the guidelines published by NJUG, Volume 4 Guidelines for the planning installation and maintenance of utility apparatus in proximity to trees
- 9.** Monitor council appointed tree contractors to ensure they are following best arboricultural practice as set out in British Standards 3998:2010
- 10.** Develop a long-term plan for replacement of tree stock where dead, dying or diseased or where tree stock is over mature to ensure a diversity of species and ages
- 11.** Develop a long-term tree planting programme to target areas where tree cover is lowest, greatest community need, softening new development
- 12.** Identify funding and develop a long-term pruning schedule that is area specific and prioritises stock in most need

13. Improve dialogue between Hertfordshire County Council and the Arboricultural Officer on issues that affect street trees and produce an annual report covering issues for the previous year.



Trees in woodlands

The council's woodland sites are valued and extremely important in terms of providing habitats for wildlife as well as green space for recreational activities and environmental education.

Sites

Watford has 50ha of woodland. These are largely mixed broadleaf with some small areas of coppice and conifer plantation. We are fortunate to have ancient semi-natural woodland (ASNW) surviving fragments of woodland which has been continuously present on the same site since at least 1600 AD with a high importance for nature conservation and heritage. Secondary woodland, which has been planted or grown on areas that were not formerly wooded. The largest woodland is Whippendell Wood, it has been a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) since 1954 due to its diverse range of fungi and invertebrates. Other smaller sites include Harebreaks Wood, Albans Wood and woodland in Oxhey Park and Orchard Park.

Legal context

Watford Council has a statutory obligation to protect SSSI sites against any activities or management that would cause damage or degradation, consent for works or activities is overseen by Natural England.

Threats to woodland trees

The main threats facing Watford's woodland sites are:

- Decline in woodland management;
- Recreational pressures such as horses and bikes;
- Utility and maintenance of assets (eg National Grid, Gas, Network Rail)
- Antisocial behaviour including fly tipping, vandalism and green waste;
- Invasive, non-native tree species and problem species;
- Pests and disease, particularly Ash Die Back, Oak Processionary Moth (OPM), and Horse Chestnut blight;
- Changing climate; and
- Difficulty in securing funding for woodland management.

The importance of woodland management

The management of broadleaved woods has declined over previous decades as the demand for wood products has decreased due to cheaper imports from abroad. Without regular thinning, woodlands become dominated by shade tolerant species and overcrowded thus restricting the growth of new trees. Without the increased light levels that regular thinning brings, woodland flowers such as bluebells and primroses will decline, and invasive species like rhododendron will take over threatening the quality of woodland habitats and the wildlife they can support. There is often a

misconception amongst some conservationists that felling trees will harm the woodland community, where in fact no intervention is often a bigger threat.

By following the principles of continuous cover forestry (CCF) and using low-impact management systems, we are creating uneven aged woodlands that are biologically diverse. Small gaps are created in the woodland canopy through selective felling and thinning which results in increased light levels, creating many woodland layers from saplings to veteran trees and deadwood. We know that management based on CCF will support the most wildlife habitats.

Biodiversity

'Biodiversity' or 'biological diversity' can be defined as the variety of living organisms on both land and water. The Hertfordshire Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) sets targets for priority habitats and species to protect and preserve, the woodland BAP highlights the following which influences the way we manage the woodlands for the benefit of:

- Bluebells
- Coral root Bittercress
- Common Dormouse
- Silver washed fritillary butterfly
- Bats
- Hawfinch
- Stag Beetle

Veteran trees

Veteran trees are an important habitat found in woodlands providing dead and decaying wood which supports fungi and invertebrate species. The Hertfordshire BAP identifies how valuable these trees are, sympathetic management is required including removing competing vegetation from the drip line (haloing) of the tree canopy and then looking at an individual plan for the tree as it deteriorates, retaining deadwood (standing and down) wherever possible.

Selling timber

When woodland management results in timber and coppice products available to sell, we will work with partners to ensure the best prices possible and ring-fence that funding so it can be invested back into the woodlands to improve public access, biodiversity, education programmes etc.

Education/forest schools

Using woodlands for learning has become increasingly popular through Forest School programmes. We will consider requests from organisations wishing to use a public woodland for this purpose and will carefully monitor the condition of the environment to protect it.

Biosecurity

With the advent of introduced pests such as Oak Processionary Moth (*Thaumetopoea processionea*) and diseases such as Ash Dieback (*Chalara fraxinea*), the council will request that in the interest of biosecurity, any nursery stock destined for Watford must be held at the nursery for one full growing season following importation. This is detailed in the Arboricultural Association's position statement to minimise the possibility of introducing new pests and diseases. (Arboricultural Association, 2016). This is known to Planning and can be passed on to any landscapers planting trees on development sites as an informative during the application process and can be added as a landscape condition.

Information regarding country of origin should be requested and the nursery able to produce an audit of plant movement on demand.

If this proves unachievable for a specific tree, the council may permit trees that do not follow this control measure providing strict inspection and monitoring are in place.

The council will take appropriate measures to prevent or reduce the risk of the transmission of emerging pests, diseases and invasive species detrimental to the health of trees and will insist that contractors are required to adhere to the biosecurity policy and should always exercise good practice as detailed on LTOA and Forestry Commission websites.

The advice to be given to developers should be as follows:-

Tree and shrub species selected for landscaping/replacement planting provide long term resilience to pest, diseases and climate change. The diverse range of species and variety will help prevent rapid spread of any disease.

In addition to this, all trees, shrubs and herbaceous plants must adhere to basic biosecurity measures to prevent accidental release of pest and diseases and must follow the guidelines below.

“An overarching recommendation is to follow BS 8545: Trees: From Nursery to independence in the Landscape. Recommendations and that in the interest of Biosecurity, trees should not be imported directly from European suppliers and planted straight into the field, but spend a full growing season in a British nursery to ensure plant health and non-infection by foreign pests or disease.

This is the appropriate measure to address the introduction of diseases such as Oak Processionary Moth and Chalara of Ash. All trees to be planted must have been held in quarantine.”

Actions

14. Preserve and enhance woodland trees through best practice as set out in the England Forestry Strategy, favouring low-impact management systems such as continuous cover forestry (CCF) to develop a diverse population in both age, species and structural diversity.

15. Ensure all our woodlands (and Local Nature Reserves) have up to date woodland management plans in place and to involve Friends Groups, Residents Associations and Volunteers where appropriate

16. Fulfil our obligation to ensure the safety of people and property through a cyclical inspection programme of Dead, Dying and Dangerous trees, whilst remembering that woodlands are natural places, with the level of acceptable risk reflecting this.

17. Retain standing dead wood (snags) and fallen trees in woodlands where possible, pruning rather than felling to ensure recommended deadwood habitat, unless there are sound conservation and safety reasons for their removal

18. Encourage natural regeneration in woodlands, but where direct planting is required, to follow good practice in plant biosecurity to ensure that trees are sourced from reputable suppliers of local/regional provenance and that no contaminated materials are introduced into any woodland sites to prevent outbreaks of disease.

19. Retain favourable condition on our SSSI woodlands through monitoring and control of activities

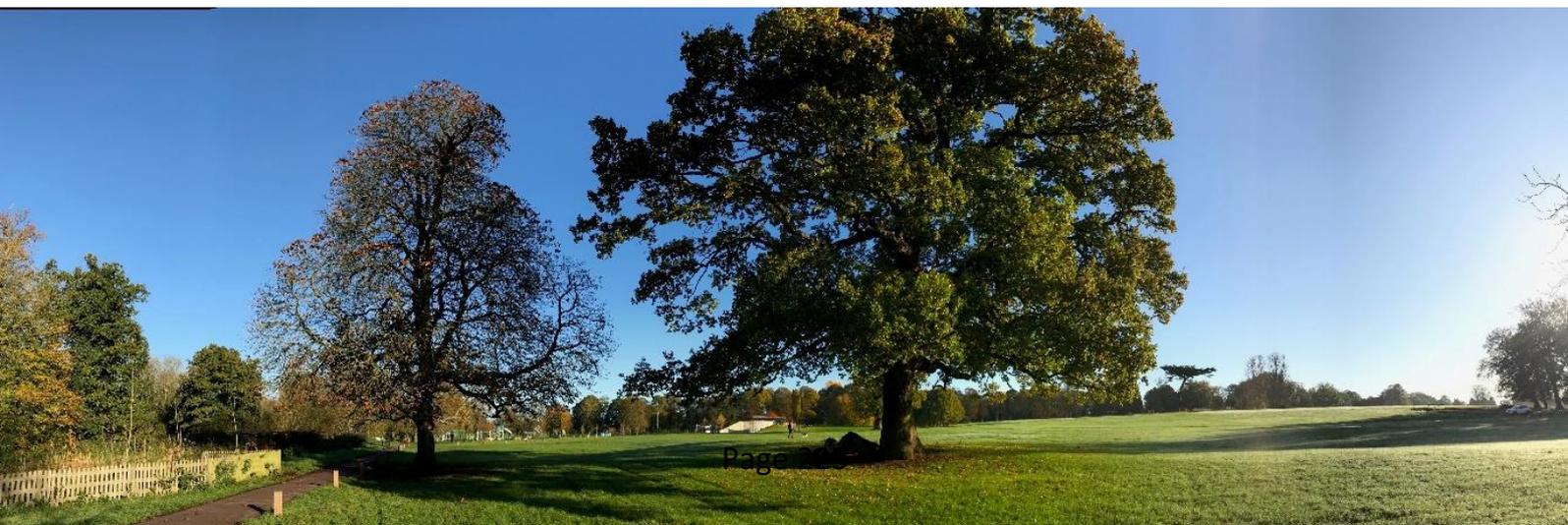
20. Encourage public access into our woodlands where footpaths or public right of way exist through good access and site signage.

21. Deliver public education programmes on the value of woodland sites, advise on Forest Schools and continue to protect sites. Deliver Watford in 50 Trees as a project celebrating trees in the town.

22. Seek opportunities to increase canopy cover and the tree stock in the borough, particularly through community tree planting and volunteer projects

23. Engage with residents, volunteer groups, community groups, universities and organisations to assist in woodland planting projects, monitoring wildlife, woodland management projects, veteran trees and community events in woodland sites.

24. Seek funding for the continued management of woodland sites through timber sales and external funding such as Countryside Stewardship



Trees in parks and open spaces

Sites

Watford has approximately 5000 trees in 506 ha of parkland and open spaces. The council is proud of its network of accessible, high quality parks and has twelve Green Flags awarded for the improvements and management of sites including Harwoods Rec, Cassiobury Park, Woodside, Orchard Park, Oxhey Park, Cheslyn Gardens, Callowland Rec, Waterfields Rec and Goodwood Rec (2019).

The Watford Green Spaces Strategy 2013-2023 recognises that trees are essential to creating sustainable, bio-diverse parks and open spaces that contribute to the economic, social and environmental aspirations of the town and people's overall quality of life. The Green Spaces Strategy sets out key priorities and the council's vision for the future management of all these sites, and in particular

- *Seek to maintain and enhance the role of undesignated green infrastructure assets such as urban street trees and incidental green spaces in reducing the impacts of climate and other environmental changes.*

Parkland tree management

The parks are well stocked with trees, from large specimen trees to small copses and woodlands. They add to the character of the parks and reflect the popular interests and fashions of the time in botany and horticulture. They offer a rich wildlife habitat by offering shelter, food and connectivity to other green spaces.

Park trees are surveyed every three years for dead, dying and diseased trees and work is prioritised. The parks offer an opportunity to plant larger canopy trees and to retain old and veteran trees through proactive management.

Due to the increase in incidence of bacterial diseases currently affecting the Cherry and Horse chestnut tree population, additional re-planting may be required. This will avoid the possibility of extensive loss of continuous tree-canopy and also allows for a diversity of species and ages to evolve.

Tree species selection, planting and maintenance

The Council will follow the guidance set out in British Standard 8545 for transplanting young trees from the nursery through to their successful establishment in the landscape so the trees can deliver the benefits they were planted for.

The choice of tree species will relate to its location and soil conditions to ensure suitable selection. Native broadleaf tree species support the greatest range of wildlife and offer the most favourable opportunities for biodiversity. Trees will be sourced from reputable nurseries where bio-security measures are proven and the tree provenance known.

Trees that have been removed will be replaced unless there are sound arboricultural reasons not to. The demand to plant trees in parks often outstrips the availability of tree planting spaces, it's important to retain some open spaces. Tree sponsorship and memorial trees are very popular in the larger parks and a good opportunity to generate the money for tree establishment and maintenance as well as creating stronger links with local families.

All newly planted trees require aftercare, to include watering as required, weeding and adjusting stakes and ties for the long-term success of tree establishment. Pruning must be delivered to address the requirements of individual trees and is usually necessary to:

- Maintain the health and safety of the tree;
- Clear obstruction to users of the highway and/or private property; and
- Abate actionable nuisance.

Intervals for pruning will vary between species and locations. Minor works, such as the removal of basal growth, will need annual attention in some cases. Pruning can take place at most times of the year, but ideally leaf flushing and fall should be avoided as well as flowering periods.

Friends Groups

Where a Friends Group exists, the council will work alongside and involve groups to establish tree management priorities, and if necessary to notify them of works as well as further involvement in other projects such as planting, monitoring, walks and talks. The staff at Cassiobury Park run regular walks and talks so visitors can learn more about the trees, woodlands and wildlife.



Nesting birds and bats

All work must be carried out to recognised, modern safety standards, such as BS3998 and BS5837 and their subsequent revisions. Precautions must be taken to avoid disturbing nesting birds between March and September. Bats are protected species and their existence must be considered prior to undertaking any tree work. Advice from qualified persons should be sought in all instances before starting work.

Ivy removal

The presence of ivy on the main trunk of a tree is not usually damaging, it will live in harmony with the tree and cause little or no damage as a healthy tree is able to restrict the growth of the ivy sufficiently through shading. It's only when the tree is in decline or dying that ivy may dominate and hide structural defects. Ivy provides a valuable habitat for wildlife and should not be removed during the bird nesting season. Trees colonised by ivy can be left undisturbed unless the tree is becoming visibly suppressed, it may also be removed to allow closer inspection of the trunk.

Actions

25. Incorporate long-term tree management objectives into existing park management plans

26. Continue to inspect trees on a three-year cyclical programme in all the parks within the borough

27. Ensure tree species selection, planting and maintenance follows recommendations of BS 8545 in relation to successful establishment of young trees in the landscape

28. Create a varied and sustainable tree population in our parks and open spaces, replacing dead or dying trees

29. Continue to promote trees and raise awareness through walks and talks, giving advice and supporting community planting events

30. Develop partnerships with local community groups and Friends Groups



Trees in cemeteries and churchyards

Sites

The two principal sites which the council manage have significant tree cover and are North Watford Cemetery, which has a large copse, with mature trees, and Vicarage Road Cemetery, which has a large number of mature trees.

The Council also maintains two closed churchyards – St Mary's Churchyard in the centre of town and All Saints Churchyard, on Horseshoe Lane. Both have a number of mature and established trees.

Memorial trees

The Council will continue to manage the Adopt a Tree and Memorial Trees initiatives funded by individuals and groups.

Actions

31. Tree and site manager to identify suitable locations for memorial tree planting and promote the scheme

32. Incorporate into existing management plans the wider management of trees in cemeteries and churchyards



5. Trees in Private Ownership

Most urban and rural trees in Watford are privately owned and they are valuable to the overall tree canopy cover. All tree owners have a duty under the Occupiers Liability Acts to maintain their trees in a safe condition. In practice this means that if their tree fails and causes damage to a person or property then the tree owner may be liable. Most residents take great pride in their trees and actively seek best advice, engaging competent contractors to carry out required work for their ongoing health.

The Council will continue to offer advice to residents as it's seen as a valuable part of tree protection, and a substantial number of trees have been saved from inappropriate pruning or premature felling.

Tree Protection Orders (TPO)

The most commonly known form of statutory tree protection is the TPO, although equally important is the designation of Conservation Areas within which established trees are protected. A TPO makes it an offence to cut down, lop, top, uproot, wilfully damage or destroy a tree without written consent. There are substantial fines involved for a breach of a TPO and/or Conservation Area Order.

As the local planning authority, the council has a statutory duty to take steps to protect trees that it believes make an important contribution to our area. Under the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (and subsequent revisions), the council has powers to make and enforce TPOs and designate Conservation Areas within which all established trees are protected.

It is usually only in cases of potential threat that a local authority will protect trees by use of a TPO. Watford Borough Council will take action to protect trees on private land through the use of a TPO where the trees meet the appropriate criteria and may be at risk from the direct or indirect action of residents.

The Town and Country Planning Act 1990 places a duty on the Local Planning Authority to:

- Ensure whenever it is appropriate that, in granting planning permission for any development, adequate provision is made by the imposition of conditions for the preservation and planting of trees; and
- Make such orders (TPOs) under Section 198 as appear to the authority to be necessary in connection with the grant of such permission, whether for giving effect to such conditions or otherwise. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) references trees in paragraph 118 when determining planning applications: local planning authorities should aim to conserve and enhance biodiversity.

TPOs and/or appropriate conditions are attached to planning permissions to safeguard existing trees and ensure that new planting is established and protected.

Detailed landscaping schemes will normally be required as part of full planning applications to show existing trees and shrubs to be retained/felled; and the planting of new trees, shrubs and grass, screening and paving. Preference should be given to the use of native trees. Wildlife corridors shall be established wherever opportunities occur.

Actions

33. To protect trees with TPOs and within Conservation Areas

34. To resist development proposals that result in damage or loss of trees and woodland

35. To ensure that all works undertaken on publicly owned trees or protected private trees will be done in accordance with BS 3998 Recommendations for Tree Work

36. To ensure whenever it is appropriate that, in granting planning permission for any development, adequate provision is made by the imposition of conditions for the preservation as well as planting of trees



6. Key actions to deliver

Key actions	Who	When
1. Maintain and update the EzyTreev database and develop a system so information can be shared easily with council departments	Veolia	Ongoing
2. Use a recognised tree valuation system to place a value on individual trees and through this a value on the entire local authority owned tree population in Watford	Veolia	Ongoing
3. Undertake regular safety inspections of all local authority trees at a frequency based on the graded analysis of threat to the public covering perceived target area, frequency of public use and appreciation of duty of care	Veolia	Ongoing
4. Ensure training to keep tree managers up to date with good arboricultural management practices	Veolia	Ongoing
5. Review and update tree works specifications to recognise current standards and best practice with a vigorous monitoring system in place to ensure contractors adhere to this and that Council tree stock is protected against avoidable damage	Veolia WBC	Ongoing
6. Ensure all development and construction work impacting on trees comply with the recommendations of BS 5837 Trees in Relation to Construction	Veolia WBC	Ongoing
7. Develop an approved list of trees for highways and parks ensuring that new trees can contribute to biodiversity and seek opportunities for large canopy cover trees	Veolia WBC	Dec 2019
8. Ensure all work for utility services affecting trees will be undertaken in accordance with the guidelines published by NJUG, Volume 4 Guidelines for the planning installation and maintenance of utility apparatus in proximity to trees	Veolia WBC	Ongoing
9. Monitor council appointed tree contractors to ensure they are following best arboricultural practice as set out in British Standards 3998:2010	Veolia	Ongoing
10. Develop a long-term plan for replacement of tree stock where dead, dying or diseased or where tree stock is over mature to ensure a diversity of species and ages	WBC	Dec 2020
11. Develop a long-term tree planting programme to target areas where tree cover is lowest, greatest community need, softening new development	WBC	Dec 2020
12. Identify funding and develop a long-term pruning schedule that is area specific and prioritises stock in most need	Veolia	Dec 2020 and ongoing

13. Improve dialogue between Hertfordshire County Council and the Arboricultural Officer on issues that affect street trees and produce an annual report covering issues for the previous year.	Veolia	Annually
14. Preserve and enhance woodland trees through best practice as set out in the England Forestry Strategy, favouring low-impact management systems such as continuous cover forestry (CCF) to develop a diverse population in both age, species and structural diversity.	WBC Veolia	Ongoing
15. Ensure all our woodlands (and Local Nature Reserves) have up to date woodland management plans in place and to involve Friends Groups, Residents Associations and Volunteers where appropriate	WBC Veolia Volunteers	Dec 2020
16. Fulfil our obligation to ensure the safety of people and property through a cyclical inspection programme of Dead, Dying and Dangerous trees, whilst remembering that woodlands are natural places, with the level of acceptable risk reflecting this.	Veolia	Ongoing
17. Retain standing dead wood (snags) and fallen trees in woodlands where possible, pruning rather than felling to ensure recommended deadwood habitat, unless there are sound conservation and safety reasons for their removal	Veolia WBC	Ongoing
18. Encourage natural regeneration in woodlands, but where direct planting is required, to follow good practice in plant biosecurity to ensure that trees are sourced from reputable suppliers of local/regional provenance and that no contaminated materials are introduced into any woodland sites to prevent outbreaks of disease.	Veolia WBC	Ongoing
19. Retain favourable condition on our SSSI woodlands through monitoring and control of activities	WBC	Ongoing
20. Encourage public access into our woodlands where footpaths or public right of way exist through good access and site signage.	WBC	Ongoing
21. Deliver public education programmes on the value of woodland sites, advise on Forest Schools and continue to protect sites. Deliver Watford in 50 Trees as a project celebrating trees in the town.	WBC	Ongoing
22. Seek opportunities to increase canopy cover and the tree stock in the borough, particularly through community tree planting and volunteer projects	WBC	Ongoing
23. Engage with residents, volunteer groups, community groups, universities and organisations to assist in woodland planting projects, monitoring wildlife, woodland management projects, veteran trees and community events in woodland sites.	Veolia WBC	Ongoing

24. Seek funding for the continued management of woodland sites through timber sales and external funding such as Countryside Stewardship	WBC	Ongoing
25. Incorporate long-term tree management objectives into existing park management plans	WBC	March 2020
26. Continue to inspect trees on a three-year cyclical programme in all the parks within the borough	Veolia	Ongoing
27. Ensure tree species selection, planting and maintenance follows recommendations of BS 8545 in relation to successful establishment of young trees in the landscape	Veolia	Ongoing
28. Create a varied and sustainable tree population in our parks and open spaces, replacing dead or dying trees	Veolia	Ongoing
29. Continue to promote trees and raise awareness through walks and talks, giving advice and supporting community planting events	WBC	Ongoing
30. Develop partnerships with local community groups and Friends Groups	WBC	Ongoing
31. Tree and site manager to identify suitable locations for memorial tree planting	WBC Veolia	Ongoing
32. Incorporate into existing management plans the wider management of trees in cemeteries and churchyards	WBC	Ongoing
33. To protect trees with TPOs and within Conservation Areas	WBC	Ongoing
34. Resist development proposals that result in damage or loss of trees and woodland	WBC	Ongoing
35. Ensure that all works undertaken on publicly owned trees or protected private trees will be done in accordance with BS 3998 Recommendations for Tree Work	WBC Veolia	Ongoing
36. Ensure whenever it is appropriate that, in granting planning permission for any development, adequate provision is made by the imposition of conditions for the preservation as well as planting of trees	WBC Planning	Ongoing



7. Implementation, Monitoring and Review of Watford's Tree and Woodland Strategy

This strategy will be monitored on the following outputs to measure the success of its implementation. The strategy and policies will be reviewed every five years.

Note - a structure for monitoring the effectiveness of delivery, identifying obstacles to delivery, monitoring achievements and reviewing processes and procedures wherever this is necessary.

Key monitoring data
Number of trees inspected in 3 yearly cycles: streets, parks, woods
Number of enquiries processed by Trees Team
Number of new and replacement trees planted in annual programme
Mortality rate of newly planted trees (%)
Number of trees removed per annum: streets, parks, schools, woodland and conservation sites.
Number of trees pruned per annum
Number of trees planted in community projects
Number of active Tree Friends Groups and details of activities
Number of Conservation Area applications processed
Number of Tree Preservation Order applications received
Quantity of new Tree Preservations Orders requested and confirmed
Number of tree planning contraventions that have been investigated
Total compensation paid to WBC/HCC in relation to trees removed/damaged in relation to development (including section 106 monies)



Part A

Report to: Cabinet

Date of meeting: Monday, 2 March 2020

Report author: Group Head of Corporate Strategy and Communications

Title: Watford BC Corporate Plan 2020

1.0 Summary

- 1.1 The council's Corporate Plan sets out the direction for the council and how it will achieve its ambitions, vision and priorities. From the areas of work identified in the Corporate Plan, the organisation develops its service plans, work programmes for service teams and individual staff objectives. The plan also provides the strategic framework for its other key strategies and policies.
- 1.2 The council's current priorities were approved in 2019 to better reflect the elected Mayor's manifesto, to demonstrate what is important to the town, and the organisation, and clearly show what needs to be achieved over the medium term. In view of this, the Corporate Plan for 2020, represents a continuation of that developed for 2019/20. (Appendix 1).
- 1.3 The council's corporate work programme as set out in the Corporate Plan is underpinned by a number of considerations. As well as the elected Mayor's manifesto, these comprise:
- The council's vision, priorities, values and supporting themes
 - The town and the council's challenges and opportunities
 - The council's budget and Medium Term Financial Strategy

2.0 Risks

2.1

Nature of risk	Consequence	Suggested Control Measures	Response (treat, tolerate, terminate or transfer)	Risk Rating (combination of severity and likelihood)
Failure to agree the Corporate Plan	Lack of clear direction for the organisation and staff and failure to set clear expectations for delivery	Clear timetable and sign off processes	Treat	4 (severity) x 1 (likelihood) = 4
Failure to identify key areas of work in Corporate Plan	As above. Resources not allocated / risk to delivery	Sufficient discussions and opportunities for feedback	Treat	3 (severity) x 1 (likelihood) = 3
Failure to link the Corporate Plan and the council's Medium Term Financial Strategy effectively.	Might result in insufficient financial resourcing for areas of work identified or failure to meet financial targets	Ensure the linkages are established and agreed	Treat	3 (severity) x 1 (likelihood) = 3
Failure to identify dependencies effectively	Risk to delivery / slippage	Sufficient discussions and opportunities for feedback	Treat	3 (severity) x 2 (likelihood) = 6
Slippage and failure to deliver commitments in the Corporate Plan without robust project and programme management.	Risk to delivery	robust project and programme management Ongoing monitoring	Treat	3 (severity) x 2 (likelihood) = 6

3.0 **Recommendations**

- 3.1 To note the revised draft Corporate Plan 2019/20 (Appendix 1) and propose any amendments.
- 3.2 To note that the work programme within the plan will underpin service plans and staff's individual work programmes as set out in their annual performance development reviews.
- 3.3 To recommend the draft Corporate Plan 2020 (subject to any amendments) to Council

Further information:

Kathryn Robson
kathryn.robson@watford.gov.uk

Report approved by:

Manny Lewis, Managing Director

4.0 **Detailed Proposal**

- 4.1 As part of its business planning cycle, the council undertakes an annual review of its corporate planning framework (its vision, priorities and values) and the Corporate Plan. Through this process the organisation reviews, and agrees, what is important for the town and the council over the medium term and where it should focus resources to deliver good quality services to our community and real improvements to the borough.
- 4.2 The Corporate Plan is the council's key planning document, which underpins its programme of work and by which it can measure its achievements. From the plan the council develops its service business plans which, in turn, inform the work programme of each team within the council and the individual objectives of each member of staff, identified through our performance development review process.
- 4.3 Through the plan, therefore, the council sets out its direction and purpose in order to:
 - Respond to the elected Mayor's manifesto and ambitions
 - Address new challenges and opportunities

- Maintain focus on delivery and outcomes
- Establish priority areas of work
- Highlight areas for improvement or transformation
- Improve employee performance and motivation

4.4 **Corporate Plan 2020**

4.4.1 **Our corporate framework: vision, values and priorities**

The council undertook a review of its corporate planning framework in 2019. Whilst the council's vision and values were considered still relevant to the organisation's agenda and ambitions, the council revised its corporate priorities to better reflect both the new Mayoral manifesto and the areas of delivery it identified as critical for success.

The revised priorities are:

- 1. *Manage the borough's housing needs***
- 2. *Enable a thriving local economy***
- 3. *Enable a sustainable town and council***
- 4. *Celebrate and support our communities***

4.4.2 With a review so recently undertaken and new priorities established 12 months ago, there is no recommendation to make further changes for 2020. The council will undertake a review during 2020, to establish its corporate performance framework for 2021 onwards.

4.4.3 This year's plan, therefore, builds on that developed last year, with the work programme revised to incorporate new areas of work identified.

4.5 **Corporate work programme**

4.5.1 The draft corporate work programme is included within the plan and has been developed to reflect the council's priorities and through consideration of:

- what has been achieved over the last year / what will be achieved by 31 March 2020 (and can, therefore, be removed from the corporate work programme)
- work that is still in progress and needs to be carried forward (with appropriate updates to reflect the milestones achieved during the past 12 months)
- new areas of work, based on the council's emerging challenges and opportunities

4.5.2 Each service area is responsible for ensuring its service plan incorporates the areas of work within the Corporate Plan where they are identified as the lead service area.

They are then accountable for delivery and for meeting any performance measures associated with their work areas.

- 4.5.3 Corporately, the overall work programme will be monitored with quarterly updates to strategic leadership team and portfolio holders.

5.0 Implications

5.1 Financial

- 5.1.1 The Shared Director of Finance comments that the importance of securing the council's financial future is outlined under the 'enable a sustainable town and council' priority, including the council's drive to develop a more commercially-minded approach. The council has developed a Medium Term Financial Strategy, which supports the synergy between its financial and corporate planning and identifies how the council will make sure it links its financial decisions to the delivery of the Corporate Plan.

5.2 Legal Issues (Monitoring Officer)

- 5.2.1 The Head of Democracy and Governance comments that the Corporate Plan is one of the policy framework documents listed in the constitution that has to be approved by Council. The current plan will be presented to Council in March

5.3 Equalities, Human Rights and Data Protection

- 5.3.1 The Corporate Plan is informed by the Watford context, including an understanding of the demographic make-up of the borough's community and feedback from local people on the issues that are important to them. An overall equality impact analysis will be undertaken on the Corporate Plan and impact analyses will be undertaken on specific projects/programmes where relevant.

Having had regard to the council's obligations under the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) 2018, it is considered that officers are not required to undertake a Data Processing Impact Assessment (DPIA) for this report.

5.4 Staffing

- 5.4.1 The Corporate Plan is a key document for staff and provides an important part of the council's performance framework that supports services to develop their own delivery plans, which in turn inform individual staff objectives and outcomes. The corporate values, which form part of the corporate planning framework, provide staff with clear expectations on the way we work and the behaviours we expect.

5.5 **Community Safety/Crime and Disorder**

5.5.1 Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 requires the council to give due regard to the likely effect of the exercise of its functions on crime and disorder in its area and to do all it reasonably can to prevent these. Priority 4: Celebrate and support our communities underpins the work the council does in partnership to ensure the town is safe for residents, businesses and visitors.

5.6 **Sustainability**

5.6.1 Priority 3: Enable a sustainable town and council – reflects the council's commitment to delivering a suite of projects relating to this area both externally and internally.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Draft Corporate Plan 2020

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: [Corporate Plan 2019/20](#)

Watford Borough Council: Budget and Council Tax Resolution 2020/21

CHAMPIONING WATFORD
a great town for everyone

WATFORD BOROUGH COUNCIL'S CORPORATE PLAN

2020



**WATFORD
BOROUGH
COUNCIL**



**Peter Taylor,
Elected
Mayor of
Watford**

FOREWORD

Over the last year we have made real progress in delivering many of the commitments set out in our last corporate plan.

When I became elected Mayor in 2018, I committed to looking at ways to make it easier and more environmentally friendly to get around the town. Since this time, the issue of the environment has moved up the international and national agenda and made tackling climate change an even more pressing issue. We declared Climate Change Emergency last year with the commitment to be carbon neutral by 2030 and my sustainable transport initiative is a fundamental part of our sustainability plans.

I am delighted that we have achieved a number of the sustainable transport commitments I promised for 2019/20:



TravelWatford transport app - allowing you to get around Watford 'your way' and make greener choices on how you travel



Bike share scheme - we have partnered with Beryl Bikes to bring you 200 pedal bikes and 100 electric bikes (summer 2020), which will be located in over 70 bays across the town



Demand responsive bus - ArrivaClick is providing seven fifteen-seater buses, which will provide a flexible service across the town – not following a fixed route at fixed times but responding to passenger needs



Electric vehicle charging points - we have delivered more points across the borough, making Watford the most electric car friendly borough in Hertfordshire



A new home for cycling in Watford - we have supported Watford Cycle Hub by funding a new Hub building, which will allow it to continue its excellent work in promoting cycling as a way to keep fit and healthy.

Our investment in the town's outstanding parks and open spaces has continued and I am looking forward to the opening of the new Oxhey Activity Park in the summer, which will give our families and young people an outstanding facility for skate boarding, BMX and mountain biking as well as a new café and community hub for Oxhey Park. Our plans to upgrade Woodside are well underway too, we will have more news in 2020, the River Colne improvement programme is also making great strides in opening up what is a wonderful, natural asset in the town.

As well as our major improvement project, we are also making sure that the local parks that mean so much to their residents also receive investment. For 2020, Garston Park, Meriden Park and Lea Farm rec will all be upgraded.

We have also continued to tackle the financial challenges we face at a time of ongoing government cuts to the council's budget. Putting these cuts into context shows the impact they have had.

We have lost around £4million a year since 2010 or 70% of our budget. This has challenged us to find new ways to finance what we do so we can continue to deliver quality services and facilities that help make Watford a great place to live, work and do business. Over the last two years, we have achieved a further £1million savings through our Watford 2020 transformation programme, which focused on changing the way we do things so that we have found savings without cutting services or activities that we know are vital to local people.

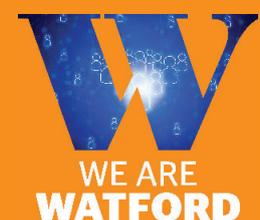
One of our greatest challenges remains responding the national housing crisis. For the most vulnerable, we have secured funding to help tackle rough sleeping and we are building new family, council homes which will be for Watford families. Whilst it is great that Watford is such a popular place to live - we are the happiest place in the East of England - and I fully appreciate we do need new homes, we must make sure they are supported by important facilities like schools and GP surgeries.

It is so important the Watford Borough Council continues to support and listen to our communities. That means regularly engaging with residents, listening to their views and celebrating the diverse and welcoming place that Watford is. I am really pleased that in my first two years we have established Watford as a Dementia Friendly Town. It shows me that when we act together we can make a real difference.

If you have any comments on the Corporate Plan, our plans, major projects or the council, then email me on themayor@watford.gov.uk or call 01923 226400 and ask for the Mayor's office.



Peter Taylor - Elected Mayor of Watford



SHAPING OUR CORPORATE PLAN

Background

Our Corporate Plan sets out our ambitions for Watford and how we will deliver these commitments over the next year. It is underpinned by the Elected Mayor's priorities for the town as well as our corporate vision, values and objectives.

As we plan for the future, we remain committed to ensuring we:



Focus on ensuring our residents and customers are at the heart of what we do



Retain the drive and commitment of our staff and members



Be more creative, innovative and resilient if we want to continue to be successful as we go forward



Retain our ambitious approach as we cannot afford to allow the town's success to recede



Be more commercial and entrepreneurial to meet our financial challenges and opportunities



Improve access to our services by delivering more digitally and online

THE COUNCIL'S VISION, PRIORITIES AND VALUES

Our vision:

To create a bold and progressive future for Watford

Our vision reflects our approach to the current challenges and opportunities facing the council and the town as a place to live, work, visit and study. We want to champion our town so that it is a place where all our communities thrive and prosper, benefitting from strong economic growth and good quality local services and facilities. This will require the council to be innovative, explore new ways of working and champion initiatives that will transform the town and the organisation.

More of the same isn't going to secure the future we want for Watford, which is why bold and progressive lie at the heart of our ambitions.

Our four priorities:

Our four priorities that we have identified to deliver our vision are:



Whilst this plan sets out the headlines projects, initiatives and areas of work that will deliver our vision and priorities, we know that our day to day business is just as important and underpins everything we do. This contributes to our success along with the work in this plan and combined they make us a successful organisation that continues to deliver for our residents and communities.

We recognise the importance of two core objectives which, at all times, makes us a more effective organisation, in touch with our residents and delivering in the areas and in a way that they expect. These are:

Effective two-way
engagement and
communication

Sound management and
high performance

OUR VALUES:

Our corporate values reflect the behaviour we expect our staff to demonstrate in their work and clearly establish how they contribute to delivering our new vision.

BOLD: We work as a team and we make things happen

PROGRESSIVE: We are ambitious, we are innovative and we are welcoming

OUR CULTURE:

We strive towards a **DYNAMIC CULTURE**, that is:

Ambitious having a “can-do” attitude to making things happen. Challenging ourselves to deliver excellent services and inspiring others to deliver results in a business-like way

Innovative embracing creative and entrepreneurial approaches and championing new ways of working that will transform Watford and deliver our ambitions

Welcoming engaging our residents and partners and providing an excellent customer experience

Empowering enabling our staff to take ownership and be accountable for their own performance, actions and decisions. Valuing diversity and listening to and understanding the views of others

Open to change being adaptable and agile in order to support the needs of the business – working collaboratively and supporting colleagues

Our Corporate Framework

How our vision, priorities, values and culture work together, along with the Elected Mayor’s priorities, to achieve our ambition. Below is an overview of our corporate framework.

Our vision:
To create a bold and progressive future for Watford

OUR FOUR PRIORITIES:

 Manage the borough's housing needs	 Enable a thriving local economy	 Enable a sustainable town and council	 Celebrate and support our communities
---	--	--	--

OUR DAY TO DAY BUSINESS

Effective two-way engagement and communication	Sound management and high performance
--	---------------------------------------

OUR VALUES

Bold We work as a team and make things happen	PROGRESSIVE We are ambitious, we are innovative and we are welcoming
---	--

OUR CULTURE

Ambitious	Innovative	Open to change	Welcoming	Empowering
-----------	------------	----------------	-----------	------------

WATFORD TODAY

Watford is a successful town, and as a council, we plan to keep it that way. We value our clean streets, well-kept parks, and places for children to play, the lively high street and diverse range of activities and facilities across our borough. We have a diverse and cohesive community who add to the vibrancy of our town and our residents are generally satisfied with the council and their local services. Understanding our town and our community helps us to identify what shapes Watford and the challenges and opportunities we face champion our town.

POPULATION

96,600

Over an area of 8.5 sq. miles

YOUNG POPULATION

36.46

Is the average age

DIVERSE POPULATION

38%

BME (ethnic minority)



HOUSEHOLDS

40,625

2.48

Average household size

31%

High proportion of single person households

37%

High number of households in rental accommodation

Happiest place in Hertfordshire and East of England

(ONS research 2019)

AWARD WINNING

12 Green Flag award winning parks - the highest in Hertfordshire

HIGH GROWTH IN HOUSE PRICES AND DEMAND

Most in demand place to live on the tube map (2015)

5th

Best connected borough in UK - M1, M25, West Coast Mainline, Overground, Underground direct services to London Euston in 16 mins

CAREER BUILDERS

Singles and couples in their 20s and 30s progressing in their field of work from commutable properties. Watford's most common MOSAIC group: 12%

ACTIVE BUSINESSES

5,900

JOBS

113,000

Low unemployment / high level of qualifications

9%

self-employment rate

£663.60

resident full-time weekly wage

£618.50

workplace weekly wage

Community Survey 2017

77%

of residents are satisfied with Watford as a place to live

74%

of residents are satisfied with the way Watford BC runs things

THE COUNCIL TODAY

Our finances

We need our finances to not only support our day to day activities and provide our services (through our revenue budget) but also to deliver the major, transformational projects that make such a difference to our town and local neighbourhoods (through our capital budget).

Budget

Our **Medium Term Financial Strategy 2020/21** includes a three year forecast that sets out our budget and looks at factors likely to impact on our expenditure.

For 2020/21 our budget is:

Gross budget: £76.1 Million

Net budget: £15.8 Million

Our staff

220 members of staff (January 2019)

37 councillors

Liberal Democrat:

26 councillors + Directly Elected Mayor

Labour:

10 councillors



Peter Taylor

Elected Mayor of Watford

Provides political direction for the council.

Responsibilities include:
strategic partnerships & external relationships

Our Cabinet

The Cabinet makes decisions which are in line with the Council's overall policies and Budget. It is chaired by the Mayor and includes the Portfolio Holders appointed by him.



Karen Collett

Deputy Mayor, Councillor

Portfolio Holder for
Community



Mark Watkin

Councillor

Portfolio Holder for Resources
& Customer Service



Iain Sharpe

Councillor

Portfolio Holder for
Regeneration & Development



Stephen Johnson

Councillor

Portfolio Holder for Housing
& Property



Tim Williams

Councillor

Portfolio Holder for
Client Services

HOW WE WILL DELIVER OUR PRIORITIES

PRIORITY 1: Manage the borough's housing needs

Why housing is a priority

Watford is a popular place to live. Its location close to London, great road and rail links, good schools and employment opportunities have seen demand for homes in the town increase significantly over recent years. However, it has also meant rising house prices and rental costs, which has put strain on affordability for local people.

The national housing crisis means that places like Watford that are popular and somewhere people are choosing to live are being asked by government to deliver an even greater number of new homes, currently 14,000 by 2036. Through our Local Plan we are working to understand what these targets mean for Watford and how we can deliver the new homes Watford needs in a way that is best for the town - making sure we have the right homes in the right places. We are ensuring new housing is supported by good quality infrastructure such as better transport links, schools, doctors' surgeries and neighbourhood shops and facilities. At the same time we are delivering homes for those families in Watford in most need, by increasing the supply of affordable homes, which reduces the number of families who are currently living in temporary accommodation. We are doing this in a number of ways including building new homes ourselves or working with partners to do so. We also ensure developments provide the right amount of affordable housing or, if it is better for our housing needs, ask developers to contribute sufficient money (through commuted sums) to provide the homes we need elsewhere.

Our plans for 2020/21

- CP1** Set the strategic direction for housing in the borough by developing and delivering a new Housing Strategy
- CP2** Working with our neighbouring authorities on the South West Hertfordshire Joint Strategic Plan to identify how the councils can support each other to deliver the new homes needed in this part of the county
- CP3** Actively engage with the Hertfordshire Growth Board to support the vision of 100,000 new homes across the county by 2031
- CP4** Manage our assets to deliver new homes, ensuring there is a good mix of housing including affordable homes:
 - Social rented homes on identified sites
 - Watford Riverwell
 - Town Centre North - Cultural Hub
 - Hart Homes
 - Ascot Road
 - Watford Junction
 - Garage sites
 - Commuted sums

PRIORITY 2: Enable a thriving local economy

Why the economy is a priority

A successful local economy is critical to all our plans for Watford. It underpins our ambitions for Watford and is vital for local jobs and keeping the town vibrant. Over the last ten years, the council has been an important catalyst for economic growth, which has attracted new businesses, built the right environment for our current businesses to thrive and secured job opportunities. We recognise that we cannot take this success for granted and so need to plan for future prosperity, continuing to make sure that Watford is 'open for business'.

Our plans for 2020/21

- CP5** Work with Hertfordshire County Council, district partners and Hertfordshire LEP on the delivery of the vision of the Hertfordshire Growth Board ensuring that Watford is effectively represented and contributes to shaping the future of the county
- CP6** Finalise and submit the Local Plan to provide a robust framework for the future spatial planning of the borough
- CP7** Deliver an Economic Growth Strategy for Watford to bring together the council's ambitions for local prosperity and business growth
- CP 8** Take forward our plans for the north of the town centre including exploring the creation of a High Street North - Cultural Hub and the overall regeneration of the area
- CP8** Progress the development and transformation of Watford Junction
- CP9** Deliver the upgrade to the Watford Junction forecourt to provide an attractive and welcoming gateway to the town
- CP10** Support the delivery of Building 1 at Croxley Park
- CP11** Support the delivery of a new multi storey car park for Watford General Hospital and West Hertfordshire Hospitals NHS Trust's future plans through Watford Riverwell
- CP12** Deliver Clarendon Road improvements Phase 3
- CP13** Deliver St Albans Road improvements to support the regeneration of the area
- CP14** Deliver the first phase of improvement for Watford Business Park (planning application approval + start on site) to provide c85,000sq ft of new industrial accommodation
- CP15** Take forward an agreed programme of improvements to Watford Market
- CP16** Secure the long-term future for Watford Colosseum through:
 - › A successful procurement of new management arrangements
 - › A planned programme of refurbishment

PRIORITY 3: Enable a sustainable town and council

Why sustainability is a priority

We want to ensure that we put in place the right foundations to ensure both our town and the council can continue to flourish in the future. This is why we declared climate change emergency in 2019, committing us to being carbon neutral by 2030.

For our town, this means exploring ways we can protect and enhance our local environment, reducing our environmental impact through practical measures. These include: offering alternatives to the car to get around the borough, increasing recycling and reducing waste and enhancing our parks and open spaces.

For the council it means securing our financial future so that we can protect services and deliver on our promises to our residents. This has never been more challenging with the council facing the loss of around £2.5 million revenue support grant by 2020 and a total saving requirement of £3 million. However, this also brings the drive to innovate and look for ways to do things differently that will deliver savings or generate additional income. It also provides the council with the opportunity to establish a sound financial basis into the future, which is not dependent on changes in government priorities or policy.

We will build on the successful outcomes of our two year transformation programme that has made us more customer-focused, digitally-enabled and commercially-minded to ensure we remain a high performing council that is delivering high quality outcomes for our communities.

Our plans for 2020/21

- CP17** Deliver the council's agreed Sustainability Strategy to support its climate change emergency commitment
- CP18** Continue to explore and deliver sustainable transport programme to offer alternative and innovative ways for people to get into and around Watford:
 - Post MLX transport solutions: safeguarding the route for alternative transport uses
 - Local Cycling, Walking and Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP) including recommendations for quiet routes
 - Progress Watford's ambition to be a Sustainable Travel Town
- CP19** Explore the delivery of a low carbon transport hub for Watford town centre
- CP20** Implement the new waste and recycling service, working with residents to increase the borough's recycling rates
- CP21** Deliver the next phase of the Sports Facilities Strategy
 - Oxhey Activity Park and community hub: completion and opening
 - Woodside Sports Village: masterplan approved

PRIORITY 3:

- CP22** Take forward the River Colne restoration strategy to enhance the river and its surrounds as a green and community asset for Watford
- CP23** Pursue ways the council can be more commercial to help offset cuts to its budget and to allow it to continue to deliver high quality services and projects to enhance the town and quality of life of its residents
- CP24** Embed and build on the transformation and improvement delivered by Watford 2020, ensuring benefits are realised and momentum continues
- CP25** Continue to manage our property portfolio to stimulate growth, generate returns and meet changing service needs
- CP26** Rollout of our business intelligence platform to provide immediate access to information to support decision-making
- CP27** Review the findings of our staff survey and use to build on our dynamic and forward thinking culture

PRIORITY 4:
Celebrate &
support our
communities

Why our communities are a priority

Our communities are what makes Watford the vibrant and welcoming place it is. We are fortunate that, whether they are made up of residents, businesses, schools or local organisations and groups, Watford's communities work together to really make a difference in the town. This is not something that we take for granted and so recognise the council has a role to play in doing what we can to support our communities flourish.

We are also fortunate that the majority of our population enjoys a high standard of wellbeing and healthy lives and are able to access help when they may need it. We recognise that this is not the case for everyone and people's circumstances can change. We need to understand where these pressure points are for our town, and for individuals, and ensure that we are working with our partners to minimise the issues vulnerability can bring.

Our plans for 2020/21

- CP28** Make our town centre safer and even more welcoming for those who live, work and visit including identifying ways to harness people's willingness to help
- CP29** Work with our partners (including New Hope and Watford Community Housing) to provide housing solutions for our most vulnerable residents with the most complex needs

PRIORITY 4:

- CP30** Identify the best future for our community assets and work with our current groups and organisations on their long-term accommodation needs
- CP31** Contribute to Hertfordshire Year of Culture 2020 so that Watford's cultural offer is well represented
- CP32** Explore options to meet the needs of our residents for cemetery provision
- CP33** Deliver the Sports Development Framework action plan to engage local people in healthy sports and leisure activities
- CP34** Deliver a new website design that makes it easier for people to access our services and find out more about the council and our services
- CP35** Undertake a Community Survey, using a wide range of engagement channels, to test our residents view of the council and the town
- CP36** Make it easier for our communities to access and claim benefits to which they are entitled

Success & confidence**MONITORING THE PLAN**

Ensuring we deliver our Corporate Plan is critical to our success as an organisation and builds our residents confidence that we keep our promises.



Making sure all our Corporate Plan areas of work are reflected in service plans, work programmes and individual performance development review objectives, building the 'golden thread' through the organisation



Identifying the key milestones for our work and holding ourselves to account for delivery – this will include regular updates to our Cabinet, Programme Management Board and Leadership Teams



Establishing a robust set of performance measures that are regularly monitored by Leadership Team, Portfolio Holders and our Scrutiny Committees. These measures extend to our outsourced services



Providing challenge and assurance through robust governance including: Programme Management Board for our major projects, Property Investment Board for our property related work and Finance Review Board for our finances

How do I find out more?

For more info visit:
www.watford.gov.uk/councilplan



**WATFORD
BOROUGH
COUNCIL**

