



**WATFORD  
BOROUGH  
COUNCIL**



# **CABINET**

**13 March 2023**

**7.00 pm**

**Rooms 201/202, Annexe, Town Hall,  
Watford**

**Contact**

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**Publication date: 3 March 2023  
Updated publication 13 March 2023**

# Cabinet Membership

Mayor	P Taylor	(Chair)
Councillor	A Dychton	(Deputy Mayor)
Councillors	J Pattinson, G Saffery, I Stotesbury, 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 16 January 2023 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.

5. **Watford Town Centre Strategic Framework** (Pages 5 - 92)

Report of the Principal Planner

6. **Authority Monitoring Report 2021/22** (Pages 93 - 208)

Report of the Associate Director of Planning, Infrastructure and Economy

7. **Focusing on Delivery: Performance and Progress** (Pages 209 - 315)

Report of the Associate Director of Customer and Corporate Service, EPMO Coordinator, Executive Head of Human Resources and Business Intelligence Manager

**8. Energy Recommendation (Pages 316 - 320)**

Report of the Corporate Procurement Manager

**9. Appointment to Hart Homes (Watford) Limited Operations Board (Pages 321 - 323)**

Report of the Group Head of Democracy and Governance

**10. Sustainability Strategy Task Group - final report (Pages 324 - 340)**

Report of the Senior Democratic Services Officer and the Sustainability Task Group

**11. Climate Change and Ecological Emergency Strategy (Pages 341 - 421)**

Report of the Sustainability Officer

**12. Croxley Park Business Plan 2023/24 (Pages 422 - 464)**

Report of the Associate Director of Property and Asset Management

Please note: the Appendix is considered exempt in accordance with paragraph 3, Part 1, Schedule 12A as it contains commercially sensitive information.

**13. Town Hall and Colosseum Refurbishment - Award of Contract (Pages 465 - 581)**

Report of the Town Hall Quarter Programme Manager

Please note: the Appendices are considered exempt in accordance with paragraph 3, Part 1, Schedule 12A as they contain commercially sensitive information.

**14. Exclusion of press & public**

**The Chair to move:** that, under Section 100A (4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public and press be excluded from the meeting for part of previous items of business as it is likely, in view of the nature of the business to be transacted or the nature of the proceedings, that if members of the public were present during consideration of the item there would be disclosure to them of exempt information as defined in Section 100(1) of the Act for the reasons stated in terms of Schedule 12A.

**Note: if approved, the Chair will ask members of the press and public to leave the meeting at this point.**

# Agenda Item 5

Part A

**Report to:** Cabinet

**Date of meeting:** 6 February 2023

**Report author:** Ellen Higginson

**Title:** Watford Town Centre Strategic Framework

## 1.0 Summary

1.1 Watford Borough Council has adopted a new Local Plan which sets out a vision and strategy for Watford to 2038. Watford Town Centre is one of three Strategic Development Areas allocated in the Plan where significant revitalisation and transformative change are expected to bring new investment into the town. The development process and output of the framework is intended to herald the change and continue the process of establishing support for change, whilst shaping the change in ways that residents and stakeholders want.

1.2 The Town Centre is a thriving retail and leisure destination with an established character and there are a number of redevelopment opportunities identified in the Local Plan, which reflect the evolving nature of the area. As the town centre has such importance to the borough economically, socially, and culturally, the Council has prepared a Watford Town Centre Strategic Framework building upon the Local Plan, to;

- i. provide an agreed view as to what Watford town centre would be,
- ii. identify guiding principles and opportunities to shape its future,
- iii. reinforce the character of the town by guiding development and interventions in character areas.

1.3 The Framework was prepared in two stages:

- 1) Identification of themes, priorities, and principles for development, through economic and land use analysis, and in-depth engagement with stakeholders, the Watford community and a range of special interest groups including schools, West Herts college and Young Entrepreneurs.
- 2) Development of a draft framework for further engagement, testing the themes, priorities, and principles from stage 1 and subsequent refinement. Following engagement focussed on discussions with stakeholders, members and then a second full resident and business consultation.

1.4 A comprehensive consultation programme has been undertaken at each stage. A combination of digital and face to face methods were used, to maximise breadth and depth of inquiry across as wide a range of groups and individuals as possible. The aim of this engagement was to inform the document and gain stakeholder and community support for the Framework.

1.5 The Framework sets out more detailed principles and design parameters for development, to:

- Guide new mixed-use residential-led development in and around the town centre.
- Provide retail, commercial and other uses, with flexibility to respond to changing economic climate and other circumstances.
- Seek accessibility improvements for pedestrians and cyclists, and better legibility of the town centre as a whole.
- improve public spaces and green infrastructure, linking the town centre to strategic green assets such as Cassiobury Park and the Colne River.

- Interpret the policies of the Local Plan to articulate clear principles and design parameters for assessing different types of development in the town centre.
- Identify ways to enable flexibility of uses, to maximise economic opportunities and support the post Covid town centre recovery.
- Recognise and embed the role of heritage, arts and culture in supporting the town centre's economy and promoting social cohesion.
- Set out how enabling infrastructure, including transport and green spaces, will support future development.

1.6 Consultation on the draft Framework document was largely supportive, more detail is set out in section 4 of this report.

1.7 This framework will guide the council's approach to the town centre, support investment in the town and support other strategies and the council's Delivery Plan projects in the area. Following Cabinet approval, it is intended to develop formal Planning Guidance to build on the Local Plan and Town Centre Strategic Framework. This guidance will steer development whilst enabling flexibility of uses in the town centre – to be able to accommodate economic change and to make the town centre a place for everyone. It will also provide additional guidance on things such as sustainability, biodiversity, servicing, massing, amenity space and balconies, character areas, movement, and public realm in the town centre providing certainty for future development.

## 2.0 Risks

Nature of Risk	Consequence	Suggested Control Measures	Response (treat, tolerate, terminate or transfer)	Risk Rating (combination of severity and likelihood)
<b>The strategic nature of the document means it is not a requirement for development and does not have significant weight for decision making.</b>	Negotiation through planning application	Progress principles into a Supplementary Planning Document.	Treat	Likelihood = 2 Severity = 2 Risk rating = 4
<b>Framework produces unrealistic expectations. Significant time and resource will be necessary to deliver some of the more ambitious projects.</b>	Reputational harm	Using the long-term ambitions of this document when undertaking shorter-term projects, already feeding into wayfinding and public art projects. Being clear that some of the ideas are very long term (for example the ring road)	Treat	Likelihood = 2 Severity = 2 Risk rating = 4
<b>Lack of support for change in Watford.</b>	Continual 'battles' with developer	Continue to engage with the public and residents etc. Produce	Treat	Likelihood = 4 Severity = 2 Risk rating = 8

<b>Residents, members, stakeholders not sharing a suitable vision for Watford.</b>	proposals and the council in the middle	supplementary planning document with clear expectations.		
<b>Lack of impact of the framework</b>	Proposals don't have intended impact and business as usual continues.	Develop SPD. Embed framework in projects such as St Mary's churchyard, Public Art, Wayfinding. Continue to engage with stakeholders. Use Framework and successful engagement to influence future policies and strategies.	Treat	Likelihood = 4 Severity = 2 Risk rating = 8

### 3.0 Recommendations

3.1 That Cabinet adopt the Town Centre Strategic Framework.

#### Report approved by:

Tom Dobrashian  
Executive Director of Place

### 4.0 Report

- 4.1 The first round of engagement to develop a Town Centre Framework was designed to reach as many groups and individuals as possible. The council and its advisors wanted to understand how people use the town centre and what they like or think could be improved. The engagement activities targeted Watford residents, visitors, businesses, landowners and investors, multicultural and faith groups, schools, West Herts college, and local youth groups.
- 4.2 The Council used the Commonplace digital platform to provide an opportunity for anyone to comment on the town centre. The website included a 'heatmap', for people to leave comments about how they feel about particular locations, and a survey to find out preferences for activities in the town centre, and suggestions for improvement. This was promoted through a social media campaign and short survey.
- 4.3 To support the digital engagement, the council wanted to create a welcoming space where people of all ages and backgrounds could comment on, and debate, the future of the town centre, and contribute their own design ideas in person. Working with West Herts College students and New Practice consultants, the council created Watford's first 'Urban Room'. An Urban Room is a space where people can come together to design their local area. Watford's Urban Room was launched on 3rd March 2022 and has been used to exhibit the West Herts College photography project, and four school projects, as well as a venue for a range of discussions with different interest groups, some of which included an experienced panel.

4.4 1,500 people took part in the stage one engagement programme by online survey, social media, in person focus groups, events and meetings. The online engagement at stage 1 received 246 comments and 42 likes. The success of the consultation should be measured by the quality and detail of responses, as well as the variety and diversity of stakeholder groups represented within them. Officers consider the engagement programme was very successful in engaging with a wide range of groups, particularly younger people, and exploring their views in more detail.

4.5 Phase one engagement identified the following issues:

Issue	Analysis	Comments
Vulnerability to change	The town centre is functioning relatively well but needs to improve resilience in relation to macro-economic changes. A key vulnerability is the over-representation of chain retail at expense of independents	People generally felt that there are a good range of commercial retail and food and beverage options available in the town centre, but there were a number of comments about the lack of independent shops.
Building form and character	“The domestic scale of the High Street is part of Watford’s character and is worth protecting” (Watford Place Shaping Panel). Heritage assets sit in compromised settings and could be made more visible Many assets are in need of attention or repair to fully reach their potential.	People tend to value the historic character of the Town Centre and would like it to be recognised.
Movement	Ring road is a barrier. Watford is dominated by cars and vehicles and their infrastructure, compromising the use of other modes and creating hostile & unattractive environments. There is an under provision of active travel infrastructure, discouraging its use, with poor connectivity of cycling infrastructure.	People commented negatively on the ring road, and how it was difficult to cross, even at designated crossings, particularly Beechen Grove, St Albans Rd, the blue pyramid building and Vicarage Rd. People felt that the Town Centre is too ‘traffic heavy’ with a lack of appropriate accessible and reliable alternative means of transport to access the town centre. Improved public transport links was the third highest priority for improvement that Commonplace respondents said would encourage them to use the town centre more. ‘Getting around’ was the fifth highest priority for social media survey respondents. Comments included requests to improve cycling and walking access.
Public spaces	Poor quality spaces and perceptions of spaces that could better relate to adjacent buildings. Limited spaces to dwell and for public arts and events. Pedestrian space and route legibility is compromised, such as along pavements and back streets at Wellstones and Gaumont. There is a lack of greening in the town centre, and a lack of usable and	People feel that the public space at the top end of the High St is of good quality (although could do with more events), but that the southern end is of poorer quality. All groups interviewed suggested more places to sit and dwell, perhaps with some covered areas, and more activities. Young people, in particular, were keen to see the Market and the Colosseum as venues to

	attractive green space, such as around Church Street	showcase local art and performance talent.
Environmental	Noisy and aggressive conditions along busy roads. Watford is not yet zero-carbon. The town centre does not yet fully capitalise on the potential of biodiversity enhancement and SuDS.	Support for Watford becoming greener and reducing traffic. Greening and sustainability measures are important for wellbeing and a sense of community.
Social	Underrepresentation of people aged 20-30 which limits the vibrancy of the centre and the strength of the labour market. Pockets of high deprivation, driven by barriers to housing/services, liveability and crime. Safety concerns for pedestrians in areas lacking in passive surveillance, such as underpasses. No consensus on future of night-time economy.	There is a perception that the night-time economy caters primarily for young people, although there are a number of boutique bars and microbreweries that people in their 20s and 30s enjoy going to. People would like to see improvements in St Mary's Churchyard, Victoria Passage and the quality of underpasses. Young people suggested that Watford needs to embrace its culture more, with a greater variety of small festivals.
Economy	Economy has not grown as rapidly as comparator locations. Lack of workspace in core town centre, with a contraction of town centre employment, notably in Professional, Scientific and Technical Activities and Information and Communications Economic mix not as diverse as it could be. Relatively low levels of entrepreneurialism, with a lack of dedicated space for entrepreneurs and start-ups. Need for higher-quality and more diverse office stock. Lack of business identity. Clarendon Road lacks brand, identity and attractive business environment.	Young Entrepreneurs considered that physical space for exchange and learning for start-ups, including digital start-ups, would be an important attractor for young, innovative businesses. Business stakeholders agreed there is a need for an artisan offer, and to encourage more independents and creatives: redesigning how we do business. They advocated greater availability of start-up space and suggested that Clarendon Rd develop a more distinctive brand and identity.

4.6 Following the first round of public engagement, a draft framework was created, this built on the issues raised through the engagement and the analysis undertaken including ideas such as more focus on pedestrians, better accessibility, more independent retailers, and encouraging sustainable modes of transport.

4.7 The draft sets out a key message that defines the Framework, sets its trajectory, responds to the analysis, and acts as an emerging vision for the town centre:

**WATFORD TOWN CENTRE WILL BE:**

- At the centre of Watford's ambition to be the economic and cultural heart of the sub-region
- A place where there is something for everyone, truly accessible to all, celebrating a diversity of uses and activities
- A leader in sustainable and high-quality development that is green, clean and safe
- A place to live, work and invest in



- A desirable destination for visitors
- A place with first-class active travel and low-carbon infrastructure

4.8 Elaborating on the key messages, a series of guiding principles set out what the development in the town centre will need to respond to.

4.9 The framework identifies seven character areas within the town centre, these areas will help to direct area-specific enhancements, outlining a different offer for each and responding to their unique characteristics.

4.10 A summary of the Framework is attached at Appendix A, in addition, a link to the full document is provided. In summary, the document covers the following:

- Strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats analysis, including economic baseline analysis.
- Identified issues for the town centre that should be addressed to improve its performance and offer.
- Analysis of the capacity for change.
- Strategic approaches to town centre uses, public realm, and movement.
- The divisions of the town into Character areas, identifying challenges, aspirations, and potential interventions in those areas.



4.11 To test the principles proposed in the draft framework, given the size of the document and in order to make the engagement accessible and engaging to different groups, the document was broken down into smaller sections to better enable engagement focussing on the analysis, opportunities and character areas. Questions on the key pages of the framework were asked to enable consultees to go straight to the section of interest.

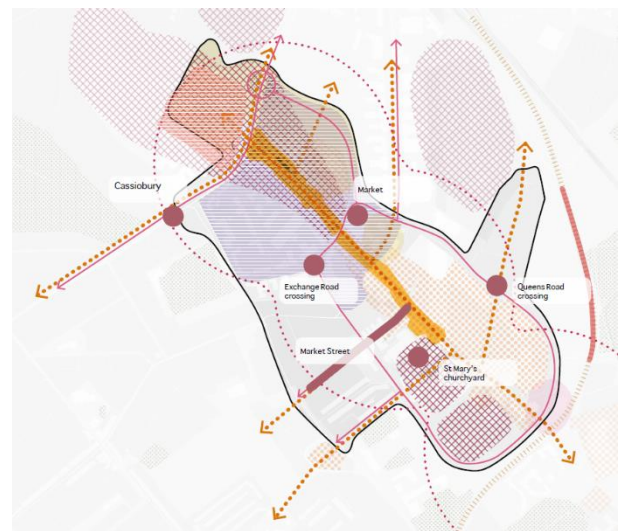
4.12 The focus for stage two engagement was to rigorously test the framework rather than maximise the number of responses, however the online site received 386 comments and 302 likes. Comments were largely supportive and didn't identify new issues, the following table highlights the key points made:

Issue	Comments
Movement	<p>People continued to comment negatively on the ring road, and how it was difficult to cross, particularly at Exchange Road close to Upton Road, and how fast cars travel.</p> <p>There was agreement for greening in principle. However, some said that there was too much focus on pedestrians/cyclists and wanted to see public transport improvements alongside a reduction in car travel.</p> <p>Concern was raised that greening, particularly of the flyover, would result in traffic congestion.</p> <p>Noted that disability access needs to be considered, particularly if it is harder to travel into the town centre by car.</p>

Greener spaces	People liked the idea of more green spaces noting the benefits to mental and physical wellbeing. It was thought that more people would visit a greener town centre. The BID noted that greening would benefit local businesses as well as residents.
Social	Support for a greater range of uses. Continued support for space for pop-up uses and space for start-up companies to move into. Support for enhancing Watford's character.
Economy	Concern was raised about the impact of having new residential development so close to existing evening and night-time uses. There was support for encouraging small and local businesses and providing space for start-ups and pop-ups but noted that the success of the town centre leaves little space for these ad hoc uses.

4.13 During the second engagement and consultation process views were additionally sought on proposed development principles via illustrated examples and precedence. A range of six locations were used to demonstrate this, these were chosen to represent the range of principles and reflect the areas that received most comments on the heatmap at stage one.

4.14 Each included an image of the existing location, a description of the existing condition and challenges, aspirations and potential for the area and some suitable precedents alongside targeted questions. These are described below alongside a summary of the feedback.



Area	Proposed intervention	Comments
Cassiobury Park link	To create a direct connection between Cassiobury Park and the town centre for pedestrians and also cyclists.	It was clear that residents and visitors are not currently aware how close Cassiobury Park is to the town centre. Support for a connection further down Rickmansworth Road and generally better links to Cassiobury Park. Many respondents are happy to use the existing town hall underpass.
Exchange Road link	To create a more attractive street character, with new crossings, creating a more equitable environment for all modes of transport, including pedestrians, cyclists and buses, and improving accessibility to the town centre for pedestrians and cyclists.	Agreed that it is particularly challenging to cross here, support to improve the environment in this area.
Queen's Road link	Create a strong identity for the area and integrate it with the town centre more positively. The area should be seen as a seamless and natural extension to the	More limited support for this proposal. People noted that the subway link to Queen's Road could be improved but it didn't need to become a street level

	<p>town centre with a diverse offer of complementary retail and commercial activity.</p> <p>A surface level crossing could facilitate pedestrian and cycle movement between the Queen's Road shopping precinct and the High St.</p>	<p>crossing. Making the entrance wider and improving planting and spaces to sit (perhaps undercover) would make a difference.</p>
Market	<p>There is potential to celebrate the Market and integrate it more with the High Street in the longer term. There is also the potential to green the flyover and redistribute traffic around the ring road.</p>	<p>Enticing the right stallholders is key, not just the design or location.</p>
St Mary's Churchyard	<p>The churchyard green space offers a unique public space within the town centre and has the potential to become a more significant public space by enhancing the green space; including more formal landscaping with seating space; and enhancing the southern end of the green space to be more organic and park-like. The dominance of Church Street should be reduced, creating a larger green public space. The connection should relate better to the High Street encouraging activity.</p>	<p>Overwhelming support for greening in this area, making it easier to access and dissuading anti-social behaviour. It was noted that this project could provide benefits for residents and businesses. Views on a play space in this area were mixed, some strong support but some wanted the space as a quiet area in the town centre.</p> <p>The idea of having a coffee shop or other kiosk in the areas also received mixed support. Some felt it would make a nice meeting spot to have a coffee, others felt there are sufficient facilities in the surrounding area already.</p>
Market Street	<p>Market Street has the potential to improve its character, strengthen its identity as a local high street and further support the town centre. There is opportunity to transform the currently car dominated space to become a more public and active travel focussed street. This will improve the setting of the historic buildings on the street, make it easier to access on foot and enhance the setting for the commercial activity, with more dedicated space for them to spill put into the public space. The two parts of Market Street can become one continuous space.</p>	<p>Concern about where the cars will go and whether pedestrianisation will have a detrimental impact on businesses by making it harder to pop to the shops here. Support for making it easier to walk and cycle down.</p> <p>Support for improving the environment so that cafes can spill out onto the street. Market Street functions as two separate areas, no need to become one continuous space.</p>

4.15 Overall, the online engagement received 1,231 contributions from 490 respondents and 2,743 visitors to the site. This and the face-to-face engagement undertaken the Framework received significant support, no new issues emerged from stage two of the consultation although feedback on the specific proposals will feed directly into future projects. Following this engagement and the formal consultation process there was only limited need to amend the draft framework as stakeholders were generally supportive, only minor tweaks have been made to the document.

## **5.0 Next steps**

- 5.1 The framework will act as a town centre strategy across the council and as a foundation for further work with our partners. Projects such as Wayfinding and Public Realm are already moving forward in line with recommendations within and building on this framework.
- 5.2 Progress Supplementary Planning Guidance to deliver the framework. This will provide additional planning guidance addressing specific concerns with town centre development such as massing, context, amenity space and balconies, character areas, site development, tree planting, movement, and public realm.

## **6.0 Implications**

### **6.1 Equalities, Human Rights and Data Protection**

An Equalities Impact Assessment has been undertaken. The engagement programme was designed to include as wide a range of groups and individuals as possible, including those with protected characteristics. The final document reflects the issues raised.

### **6.2 Staffing**

Existing internal Project Team to continue to work on the project, this includes officers from Planning Policy and Communications.

### **6.3 Community Safety/Crime and Disorder**

The Framework principles will help to ensure high quality design including designing for safety/designing out crime considerations. These will be reinforced in future guidance.

### **6.4 Sustainability**

The strategic Town Centre Framework sets out development guidance and interventions that will help to achieve the Council's ambition for Watford to be a sustainable town.

### **6.5 Financial consideration**

The Council's capital programme includes budgets for existing projects including wayfinding and public realm works. Where proposals within the framework fall outside of existing budgets business cases will be prepared setting out the benefits and affordability of the projects. These will be considered for approval by Council through the usual budget setting framework.

### **6.6 Legal Considerations**

There are no legal considerations from this report.

## **7.0 Appendices**

- 7.1 Appendix 1: Watford Town Centre Strategic Framework

# MACCREANOR LAVINGTON

with New Practice and Avison Young

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## WATFORD TOWN CENTRE Strategic Framework

February 2023



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O	07/02/22	Internal Team Draft	Team	ML	ML
A	11/02/22	Internal Team Draft - updates & additions	Team	ML	ML
B	21/02/22	Draft issued to WBC	Team	ML	ML
C	23/05/22	Updated draft	Team	ML	ML
D	29/06/22	Final draft	Team	ML	ML
E	12/08/22	Updated draft	Team	ML	ML
F	26/08/22	Updated draft	Team	ML	ML
G	29/08/22	Updated draft - minor amendments	Team	ML	ML
H	31/08/22	Updated draft - minor amendments	Team	ML	ML
I	15/02/23	Final draft	Team	ML	ML

**CLIENT**  
London Borough of Ealing

**PROJECT TEAM**  
Maccreanor Lavington

- Project lead | Urban design

**Avison Young**

- Market Economics

**New Practice**

- Public Engagement

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# HOW TO READ THIS FRAMEWORK

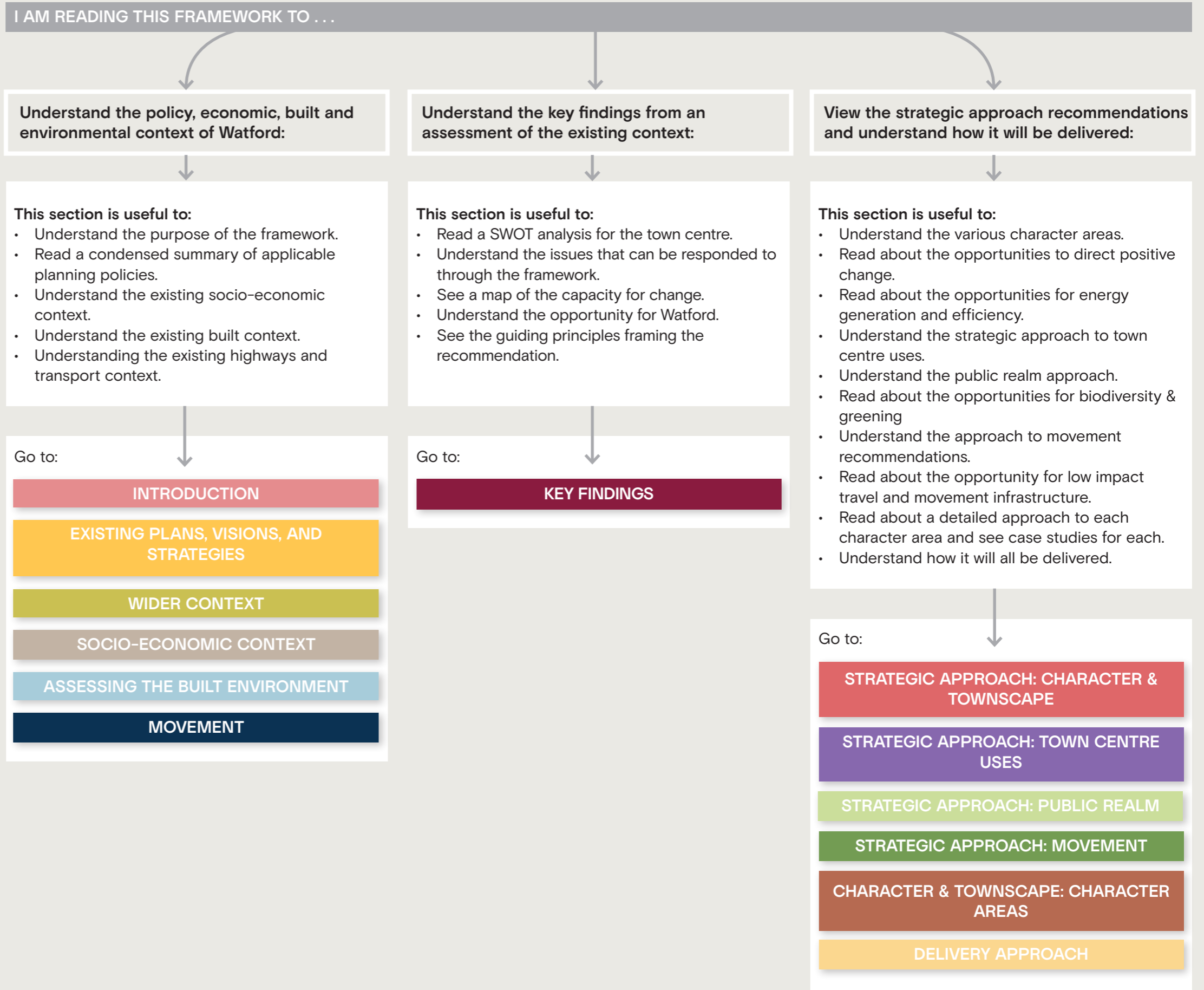
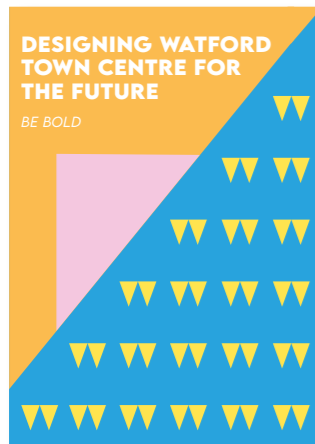
The Watford Town Centre Strategic framework can be consulted in different ways, depending on the purpose and outcome. The flow chart alongside summarizes the content and purpose of the framework:

The flow chart on this page summarises the three sections:

- **CONTEXT: Baseline Findings.**
- **KEY FINDINGS: Assessments.**
- **STRATEGIC APPROACH: Recommendations.**

This document includes and summaries a separate engagement process and economic evidence base and recommendation.

## ENGAGEMENT PROCESS FINDINGS:



# INTRODUCTION



# INTRODUCTION

Set out here is a draft of the Watford Town Centre Strategic Framework, currently being developed by Maccreanor Lavington, New Practice & Avison Young alongside WBC. The Framework sets out principles and design parameters for development, including application of low carbon/ circular economy principles, to deliver:

- New mixed-use residential-led development in and around the town centre
- Retail, commercial and other uses, with flexibility to respond to changing economic and other circumstances
- Accessibility improvements for pedestrians and cyclists, and better legibility of the town centre as a whole
- Improved public spaces and green infrastructure, linking the town centre to strategic green assets such as Cassiobury Park and the Colne River.



# EXISTING PLANS, VISIONS, AND STRATEGIES

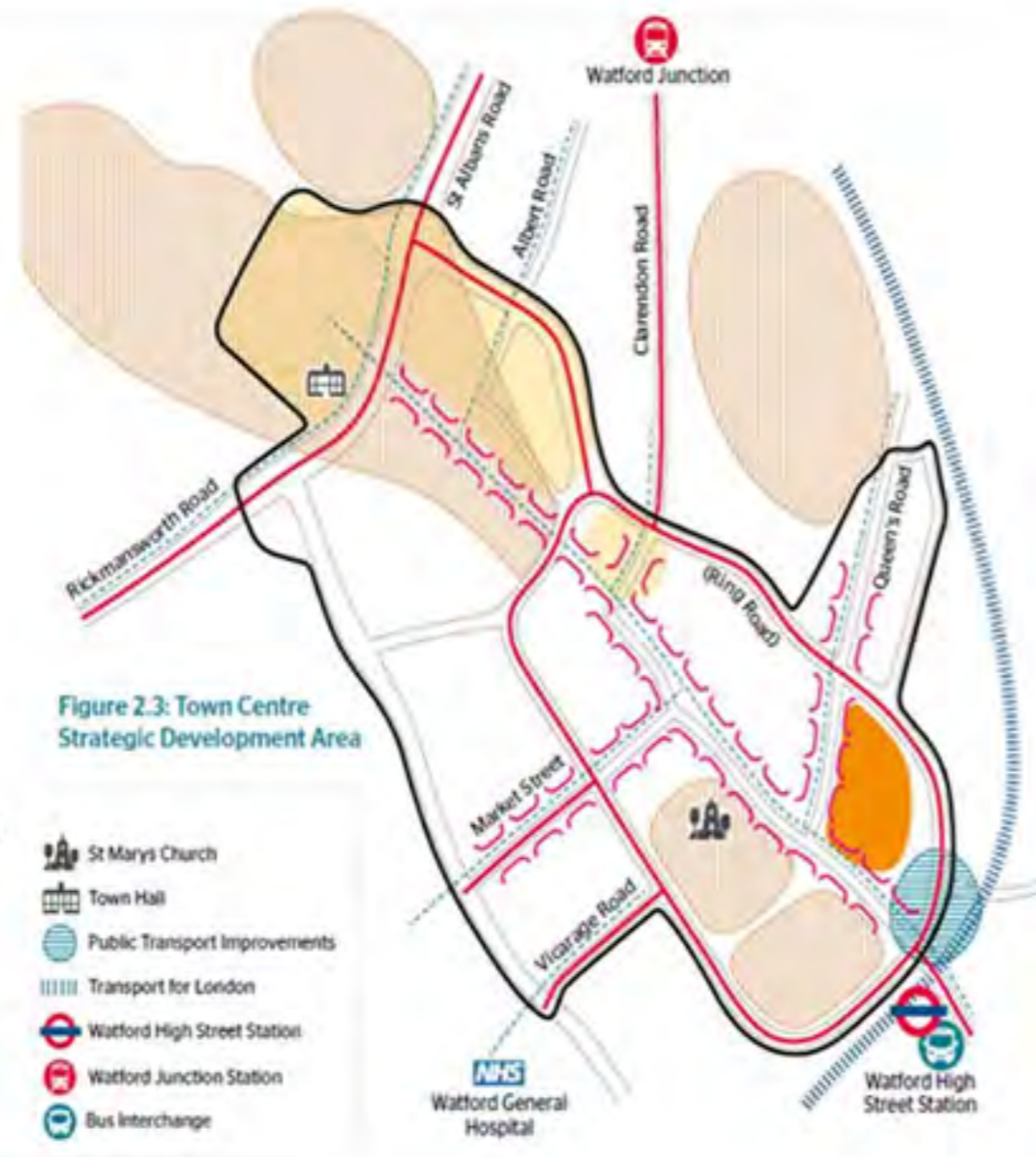
# EXISTING PLANS, VISIONS, AND STRATEGIES

## A compendium of work

Much work has been done to date on Watford Town Centre, with more ongoing, and a collective review of the latest and most relevant material is provided here.

### CONTEXT FOR THE FRAMEWORK

The Council has prepared a final draft of a new Local Plan, which sets out a vision and strategy for Watford up to 2036. Watford Town Centre is one of three Strategic Development Areas, where significant revitalisation and transformative change are expected to bring new investment into the town. This framework brings principles across a series of themes that elaborate on the Strategic Policy for the Town Centre Strategic Development Area.



Watford town centre strategic development area

### WATFORD DRAFT LOCAL PLAN

“Strategic Policy CDA2.2: Town Centre Strategic Development Area” supports development proposals where good design contributes positively towards creating a vibrant town centre, focused on people, healthy lifestyles and quality of life. It encourages sensitively located residential development and active frontages on the ground floor, such as flexible workspace. Proposals should demonstrate how they will reduce the dominance of vehicles, create green links and incorporate innovative approaches to waste management.



Watford Local Plan extents

### COUNCIL PLAN 2020-2024

The Council will champion bold approaches, innovative thinking and collaborative working.

It will encourage people to make greener travel choices, promote improvements to Watford's biodiversity, and work with communities and business to reach net carbon neutral, and reduce waste.

The Council will position Watford as a town where start-ups and business innovation can thrive, with quality and affordable homes, and supported by the right mix of facilities, services and transport links.

It will continue to invest in outstanding parks and open spaces, celebrate the town's rich and diverse culture and creativity and support improved health and wellbeing across the town.

**COUNCIL PLAN ON A PAGE 2020-24**

**Watford Together**

OUR TOWN. OUR FUTURE

We are ambitious for our town, our residents and our businesses, and we want to see them flourish, now more than ever. Our Council Plan gives us the chance to look at our commitments to the town and our community for the next four years. It links our long-term goals and what we know is important to Watford now, given everyone's experiences of COVID-19. As our future roadmap, it informs our budget setting, is an essential tool for the planning and delivery of services, and helps our staff understand how the work they do makes a real difference to the people of Watford.

**Our corporate themes**

- 1 A council that serves our residents**  
We are a different kind of council - pioneering and always searching for better answers, a bold council that gets things done, focuses on opportunity and challenges old-fashioned thinking. We work as 'one team' and everything we do is to make our town successful and improve the lives of our residents.
- 2 A thriving, diverse and creative town**  
We want Watford to be an outstanding place for everyone: residents, business owners and visitors alike. Our plans have created a thriving and attractive town, but we know we cannot stand still. We must always look to the future and be ambitious for Watford, to guarantee our continued success and prosperity. This has never been more important as we look to thrive post COVID-19.
- 3 A healthy and happy town**  
Our community are the strength and the heart of Watford. We know they have great civic pride and enjoy getting involved in the life of the town. We have seen them care for each other like never before and we want this great spirit to be the launchpad for something very special for Watford in the years to come. Our diverse town inspires us every day and we want its community to really feel a part of our joint future.

**Our commitments**

- Make sure our council is a caring and collaborative organisation that puts what matters to people at the heart of everything we do.
- Deliver high-quality, sustainable services.
- Empower leaders at all levels in our council to inspire our organisation and our communities.
- Focus our budget to deliver on our commitments and secure investment to work for Watford.
- Welcome innovation, technology and new ways of working to continuously improve.

**Our commitments**

- Promote Watford as an enterprising town where businesses can invest, grow and succeed.
- Create thriving and affordable neighbourhoods and the right environment for businesses to flourish.
- Ensure the right mix of facilities, services and transport links as part of new developments to create successful, well-designed new communities.
- Make sure we have quality homes to meet the needs of residents, including housing that is affordable through ownership, private rental and social housing.
- Build on our new, greener ways to travel in and around Watford and promote the transition to a low-carbon economy.

**Our commitments**

- Celebrate our diversity, heritage and culture, to make Watford a place for people to succeed from childhood to old age.
- Enable our cultural and creative sectors to flourish.
- Ensure we have quality events, recreational opportunities and outdoor spaces for people to get together, feel part of the town and boost their health and wellbeing.
- Work even more closely with the voluntary and community sector, to build a resilient community where people support each other.
- Work with partners to end rough sleeping and help people enjoy better lives.

**OUR GUIDING PRINCIPLES UNDERPIN HOW WE DELIVER ON OUR THEMES AND COMMITMENTS**

**Excellence** Work with partners to deliver excellent outcomes for our customers and communities.  
**Promotion** Promote Watford widely to maximise our town's potential.  
**Impact** Use our resources wisely to maximise financial, social and environmental impact.  
**Enterprise** Challenge ourselves to be ambitious and entrepreneurial.  
**Leadership** Bring people who care about the town together to get things done.  
**Caring** Respond thoughtfully to show our readiness to help others.

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**WATFORD BOROUGH COUNCIL**

## WATFORD NORTH HIGH STREET CULTURAL HUB MASTERPLAN, 2019

A masterplan for the area around the northern part of the High Street. The objectives from this masterplan are based on careful analysis of the specific area, and provide a useful context for the analysis of the wider town centre.

The key objectives for the Watford High Street (North) and Cultural Hub are to increase footfall, develop a stronger retail, daytime and evening economy whilst enhancing the heritage assets in the area to complement the southern part of the High Street.

Proposals from the masterplan include:

- A network of new public open spaces in the Town Hall Quarter and the High St North area, including public art, tree planting, cycle parking and cycle

hire stands. It recommends developing a better mix of uses in the north part of The Parade, and bringing vacant buildings and upper floors into productive use.

- New, high quality, landmark buildings are needed on development sites, that reflect and enhance the Conservation Area. It also proposes enhancing existing views of key buildings and improving movement corridors for pedestrians and cyclists.
- In the longer term, strategic transport improvements, which could involve a pedestrian crossing across Rickmansworth Rd, introduction of bus priority routes and wider pavements.

On the whole the objectives and proposals align well with aspirations anticipated for the Framework.

## WATFORD ECONOMIC GROWTH STRATEGY, 2021-2025

The Watford Economic Growth Strategy (2021-2025) identifies opportunities to grow the employment base in the Creative, Cultural & Digital and Health industries. It includes an aspiration to establish Watford as the gateway to the UK's Film and Television sector and as a centre for culture and entertainment. This is mainly because of the growing creative and cultural industry in and around the borough.

Watford's economy was hit hard by the 2008-2010 recession, but bounced back strongly. The town as a whole is now home to over 5,000 businesses which generate billions for the economy each year. The town centre is a key part of this and has evolved in line with macro-economic shifts to the retail and leisure markets.

A clear vision for economic growth is set out in the new Economic Growth Strategy (2021-2025), which recognises the range of pressures facing the local economy (i.e. COVID-19, Brexit and Climate Change). The vision is for Watford "to be known as a successful, diverse and premier location for business, acting as the vibrant centre for the South West Hertfordshire economy, attracting forward-looking businesses and entrepreneurs who recognise its super-connectivity, outstanding skill base and flair for innovation".

One of the five priorities set out for economic growth is to create a new economic future for the town centre. This is to be achieved by making the TC accessible for all, as well as investing in infrastructure and regeneration projects. It will offer a diverse mix of national and independent retail and leisure offers, combined with a new residential community.

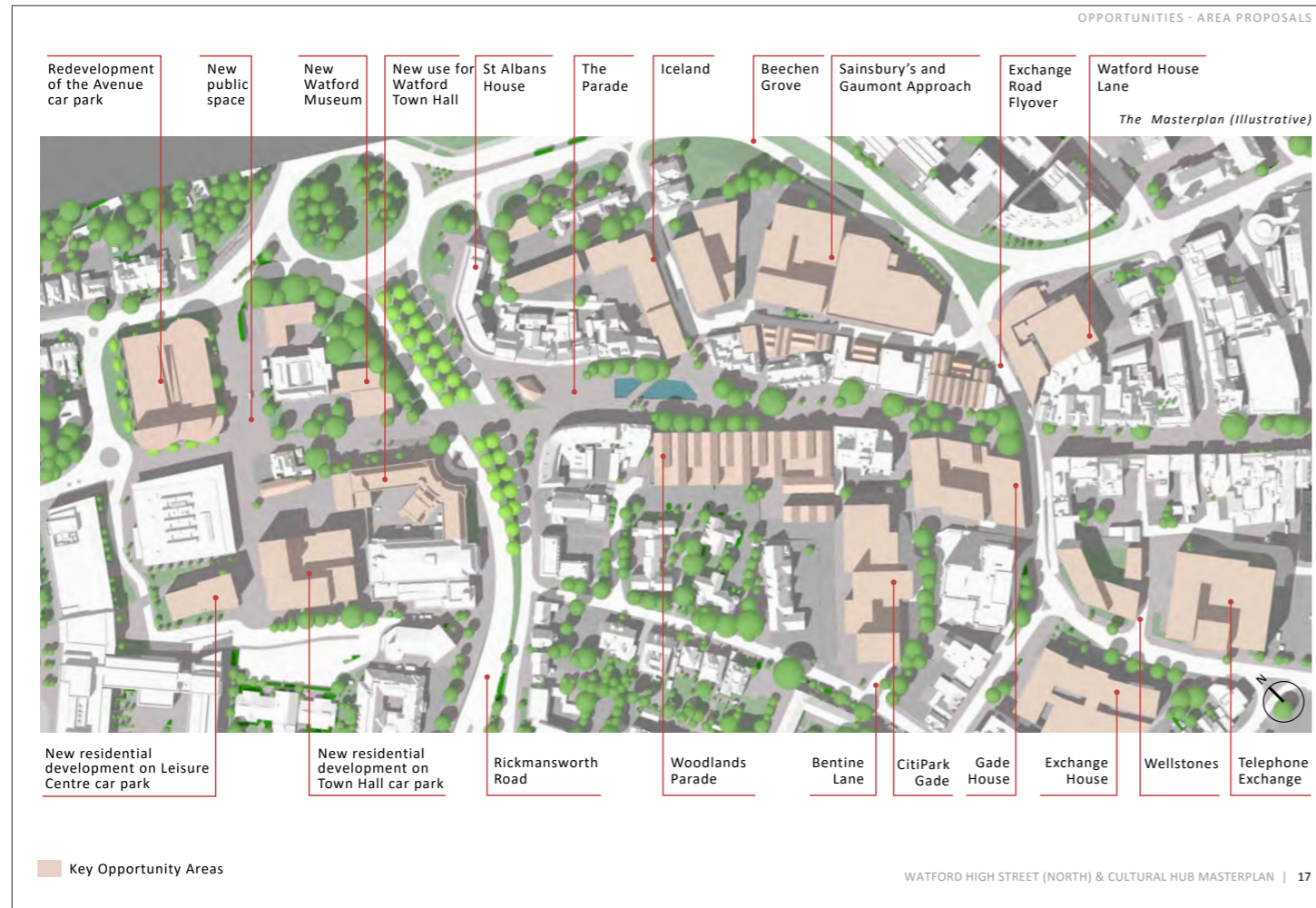
Key messages from the economic growth strategy:

- Watford has a strong, diverse business base and enterprise culture, a young, well-educated population, a strong supply of jobs, with a high number of knowledge-intensive jobs, and a strong track record of attracting private-sector investment. It has the right foundations in place to build and develop a new economic future for the town centre, benefit from the growth of cultural, creative and digital businesses in the area and grow its healthcare sector.
- Watford is home to 5,400 businesses (as at 2020), with the number of new businesses growing at a faster rate than Hertfordshire or England as a whole over the preceding five years.
- Watford Borough generally has low levels of deprivation, reflected in relatively high income and employment levels. However, there are pockets of deprivation around the town centre affected by crime, living environment deprivation, health and disability, and education, skills and training deprivation in particular.

Watford has a range of sectors that are important to the economy but the following four sectors have been identified as priorities for Watford:

- Professional services
- Creative, cultural, digital, media and film, including IT
- Healthcare (medical services, medical equipment and pharmaceuticals)
- Retail, hospitality and leisure

Note: the findings from the economic evidence base that add to these messages should be separately listed.



## TRANSFORMING TRAVEL IN WATFORD, 2021-2041

This vision for travel sets out how WBC propose to make it easier for people to get around Watford, particularly by walking, cycling and using public transport.

The objectives of the strategy are to:

- Cut congestion by reducing the number of car journeys and making cycling, walking or public transport the natural first choice for local trips.
- Invest in efficient and green ways to travel .
- Boost health and wellbeing by encouraging healthier travel choices that improve physical and mental health, improve air quality, and make our streets safer.
- Ensure all our community benefits by offering equality of access to transport for all.

- Provide green and environmentally friendly travel solutions.
- Promote high quality, easy-to-use travel options.

A survey carried out as part of the strategy found that 80% of respondents agree that changes to the transport network are necessary to tackle climate change.



People tended to agree that more road space should be allocated to sustainable transport modes such as cycling and public transport, and that Watford would be more liveable with fewer cars.

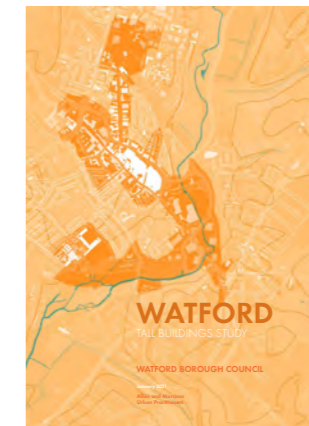
Respondents felt that improving public transport, as well as cycling and walking infrastructure, would have the biggest impact on their travel habits.

## FURTHER REPORTS

1. A cultural hub report for the town hall campus is also currently underway, with investigations informing this framework.



2. A Tall Buildings Study from 2021 recommended building heights in the Town Centre of five storeys on the High St, stepping up to eight storeys to the rear. Proposals for building exceeding these base building heights would need to demonstrate both exceptional design quality and significant public benefits. These recommendations have been included as policy in the new Local Plan.



3. The Sustainability Strategy 2020-2023 outlines the challenges faced by climate change and responses from the Watford Borough Council on ways in which to mitigate this through policy change and project implementation. A new iteration of this strategy is currently being created.



Transforming Travel in Watford Strategy Diagram

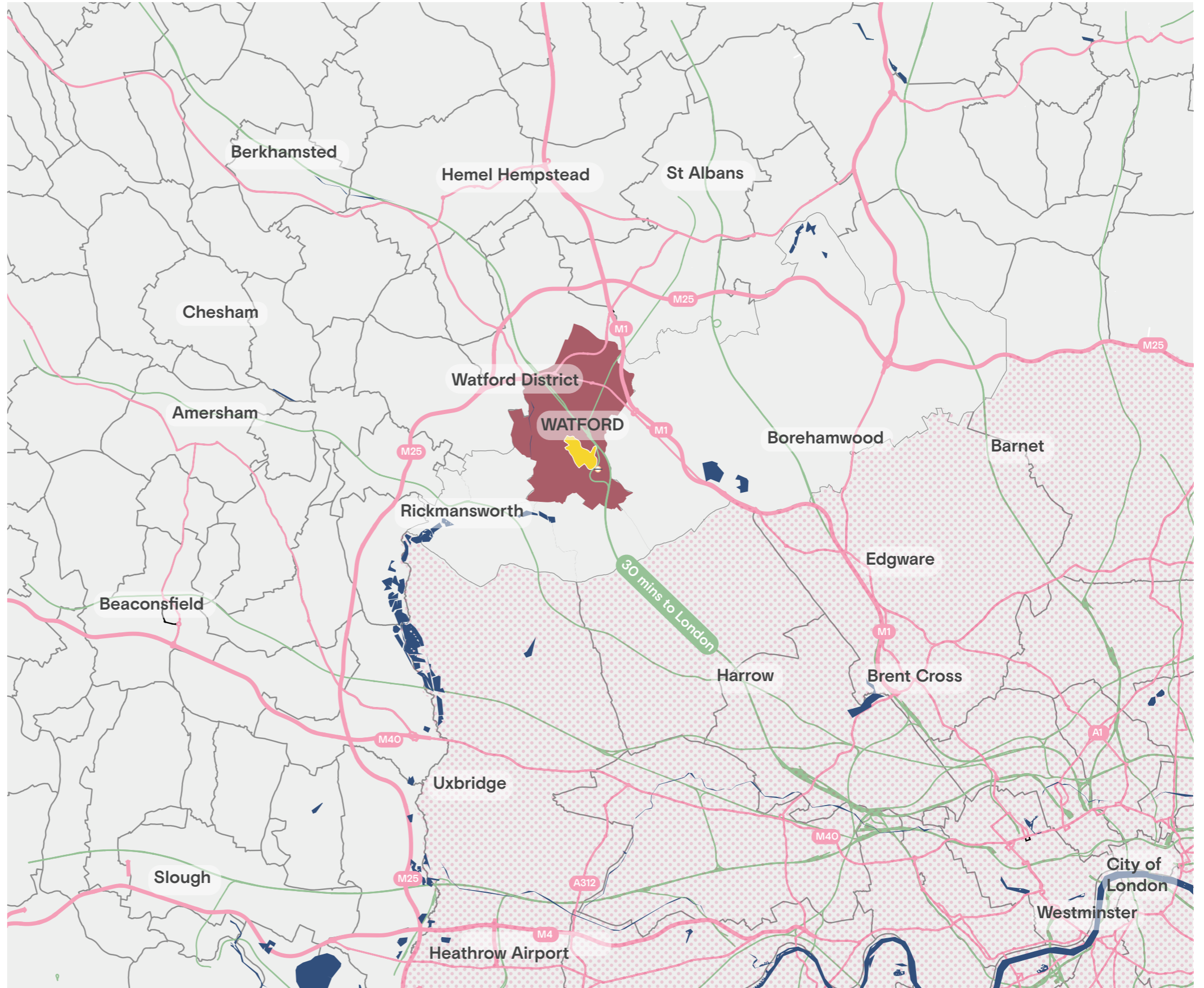
# WIDER CONTEXT

# WIDER CONTEXT

## Watford and its hinterland

Watford is a town and borough in south-west Hertfordshire. It is well connected with London and Birmingham by both rail and road, as well as with other towns nearby and the rural Chiltern countryside beyond.

Excellent public transport links connect the centre of Watford to London, the Midlands and the North, as do convenient road connections via the M1, M25 and A41. A market town, originally known for traditional industries including printing, Watford has successfully diversified into an attractive and popular regional shopping and business centre and a focus for culture and recreation.



Watford in the larger metropolitan area.

- Watford
- Study Area
- Greater London
- Railways
- Motorways

# SOCIO-ECONOMIC CONTEXT



# SOCIO-ECONOMIC CONTEXT

## Overview

**Watford has a successful and well-used Town Centre with low retail vacancy rates and strong footfall, but the quality of retail stock is relatively poor compared to similar town centres.**

Watford's Town Centre is successful and has a strong offer with specialisms in clothing, footwear, health, beauty, cafés and fast-food. It benefits from several footfall-generating anchor stores including M&S, Next Home, Boots and Flannels. The Town Centre also has healthy churn and vacancy rates with the Watford Business Improvement District (BID) noting that they receive a high number of enquiries from a range of different types of businesses.

The retail stock is, however, generally (although not universally) comparatively poor quality with c.90% of units classified as 2-3 stars ("poor to average") by Co-Star. The quality of retail stock is lower than in comparator town centres such as Aylesbury, Uxbridge, Kingston-upon-Thames, Woking and Bromley. This is reportedly acting as a barrier to smaller, independent businesses entering the market particularly when combined with a lack of diversity within the retail stock.

**The Town Centre is dominated by at-risk chain retailers leaving it highly vulnerable to macro-economic shifts...**

Watford Town Centre has, like many centres, been impacted by macro-economic factors and retail market restructuring. Within the Town Centre this is demonstrated by the loss of national multiples such as Debenhams and John Lewis in recent years. The Town Centre is highly vulnerable to these shifts as it is dominated by national chain comparison retailers, which account for c46% of units according to Experian GOAD, which is much higher than in comparable locations such as St Albans and Aylesbury.

Engagement undertaken as part of the process indicates that there are several gaps in the offer that present opportunities to diversify the Town Centre and attract investment and footfall. These include noted potential to establish an artisan offer (e.g. delis, wine shops, independent boutiques), inclusive businesses that cater to the town's catchment, and more places to experience or participate in formal and informal leisure and cultural activities (e.g. art galleries, independent cinemas, artisan theatre houses, comedy clubs and intimate music venues).

The Institute for Place Management suggest that to ensure Watford Town Centre remains vibrant and diverse, and to reduce its vulnerability, interventions should seek to increase the prominence of the leisure, cultural, non-retail and independent uses.

### Focus On: The Future of Town Centres

The performance, resilience and importance of town centres and high streets continue to feature prominently in the news. The closure of major retailers such as Debenhams, House of Fraser and British Home Stores, alongside ongoing impacts of COVID-19 trading restrictions, have fuelled headlines related to the 'death of the high street'.

While this narrative has strengthened in recent years, it has been pervasive over the last decade driven by a steady decline in bricks and mortar retail following the last global recession and surge in online retailing. This coverage and these numbers do not, however, tell the full story as many high streets are performing well. Places like Manchester, Watford, Cambridge, Brentwood, Kingston-upon-Thames, and Bury St Edmunds have centres that are lively, benefit from high footfall and have relatively low retail vacancy rates.

There are also big shifts and opportunities emerging within the retail, hospitality and leisure sector that are expanding into the market space previously occupied by comparison chain retail. These reflect changing consumer demand. Key trends observed over the last five years that are relevant to Watford include:

- Increasing expenditure on 'self': Over the last decade consumer habits have shifted from buying products to spending money on personal services and activities;
- Rising demand for leisure activities: The past five years has seen a significant growth in the leisure sector which now accounts for over 14% of consumer spending. One of the most prominent opportunity sectors is competitive socialising which is characterised by games and activities for adults;
- Increasing consumer conscientiousness: Consumers are increasingly reporting that they want to buy local products and that they care about the sustainability and ethical credentials of businesses they buy their goods from; and,
- Higher demand for independents: Many chain retailers have been retreating from high streets at pace. The space being vacated by chain retailers is, however, being filled by independent businesses which appear to be in higher demand.

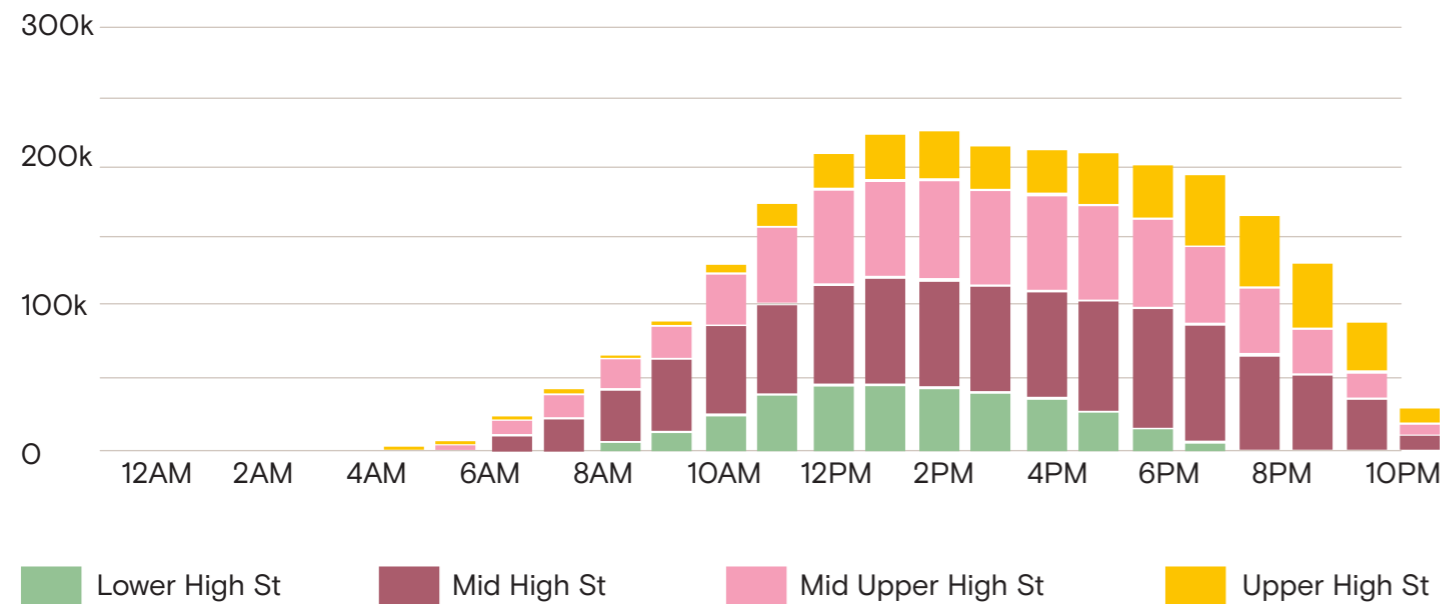
If Watford can marry its already diverse, footfall-generating town centre mix with emerging uses that respond to emerging consumer trends it will be well equipped to remain more resilient into the future.

# Commercial Activity

People use the Town Centre for daytime commercial activities with footfall highest on Fridays and Saturdays, but there is a shrinking evening and night time economy...

Visitors to Watford Town Centre tend to use it for commercial activities such as specialist shopping, running errands and participating in leisure, community and cultural activities. Engagement suggests that users value having places to visit, meet, experience and fulfil their daily needs.

Recent data shows that footfall is highest during the day between 12 and 5pm, with peaks on Fridays and Saturdays. There is a dramatic decline in footfall after 9pm across all days reflecting qualitative reports of a shrinking evening and night time economy. This is likely to link to the COVID-19 pandemic and the closure of major night time venues such as Hydeout. In general, Town Centre footfall has recovered relatively strongly following the COVID-19 pandemic, but still remains below pre-pandemic levels.



Footfall in Watford Town Centre by Time (April 2021-January 2022). Source: Countwise / Watford BID

The Town Centre plays an important role in the borough's economy, but its contribution is shrinking...

Watford Town Centre, incorporating Clarendon Road, is home to c.1500 business and approximately 29,000 employees. These enterprises underpin the borough's economy which generates around £5.4 billion in Gross Value Added each year.

Beyond traditional town centre amenity sectors (e.g. Retail and Food & Accommodation), the Town Centre has strong and unique economic specialisms in higher-value Professional, Technical & Scientific Activities and Information & Communication Services. There are 3.1x more employees in the Professional, Scientific and Technical sector than in the national economy and 1.7x more businesses in the Information & Communication sector versus the national economy.

Over the last five years of available data, however, employee numbers in the Town Centre have declined by -24% despite an increase in the business base. While most comparator town centres considered have not fared well on this measure, Watford Town Centre has performed particularly weakly.

This shift has mainly been driven by a reduction in Professional, Scientific & Technical employment which is thought to reflect the high levels of office re-development currently underway on Clarendon Road (e.g. former Edward Hyde House, Gresham House, Regus, Magistrates Court and Hannay House) and the loss of office space above retail units in the core of the Town Centre.

While economic performance may recover once re-development has completed and businesses occupy space created, these trends illustrate the vulnerability of the local economy and its dependence on the provision of high-quality employment space. There is also a risk that some businesses will not return, particularly given the uncertain trading conditions currently facing some sectors.

BUSINESS CHANGE		EMPLOYMENT CHANGE	
Uxbridge TC	18%	England	2%
<b>WATFORD TC</b>	<b>13%</b>	Maidstone	1%
Aylesbury TC	12%	Uxbridge	1%
Maidstone TC	10%	Wycombe	-1%
England	8%	Bromley	-1%
Bromley	8%	Aylesbury TC	-1%
Wycombe	4%	Woking TC	-11%
Kingston TC	4%	Kingston TC	-18%
Woking TC	-3%	<b>WATFORD TC</b>	<b>-24%</b>

Business and Employment Change by Town Centre (2016-2020) Source: BRES / UK Business Count, 2020

# The Local Economy

The borough's future economy is expected to be underpinned by a range of sectors, including higher-value office-based industries...

Experian projections indicate that Watford's future economy will be driven by a diverse range of industries, most notably higher-value office-based sectors such as Professional Services, Real Estate, Finance and IT. These represent key sectors that can be prioritised to help grow Watford Town Centre's future economy and increase its productivity.

Other industries projected to drive the borough's future economic growth include typical town centre sectors (e.g. Retail, Recreation and Accommodation & Food Services), public services (e.g. Health, Social Work and Education) and industrial type activities (e.g. Wholesale and Transport & Storage).



Watford Borough Employment Projections (2017 – 2041)  
Source: Experian, 2021

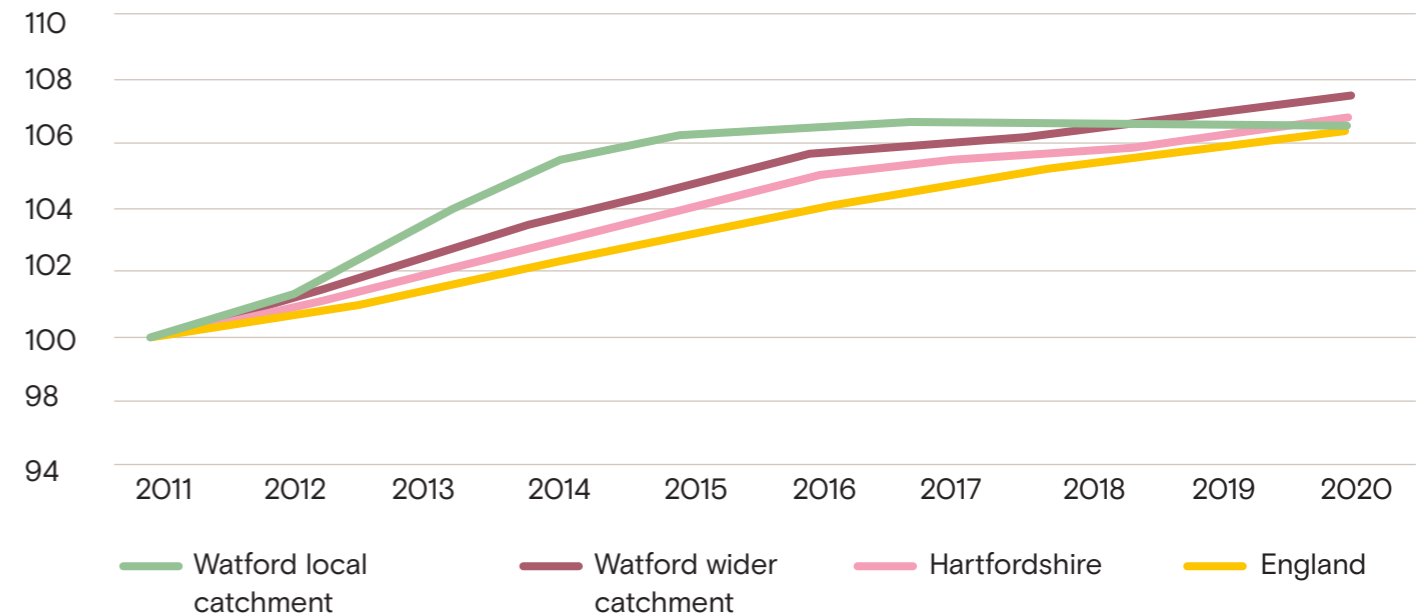
The local economy is not as innovative or entrepreneurial as it could be...

Despite its strong local economy, dominated by micro-businesses (c.90% of total businesses), Watford is not as entrepreneurial as it could be and generates fewer start-up businesses than comparative areas. In 2019, for example, 1,105 businesses started up in Watford versus 4,180 in Woking, 2,940 in Bromley, 2,940 in Kingston-Upon-Thames and 2,545 in Wycombe.

Discussions with local commercial agents indicate that this may link to the fact that the borough and Town Centre have few facilities that provide low-cost business space with wraparound business support for entrepreneurs, and there are few facilities to cater for the rise in freelancers and hybrid workers. The Junction and Citibase on Clarendon Road are two of the co-working spaces offered in the Town Centre, and the only local innovation centre is Watford Innovation Park which sits outside the borough boundary.

The Town Centre's local catchment is home to nearly 100,000 people and the wider catchment has c.550,000 people...

Watford Town Centre's local catchment has around 100,000 people which is +7% higher than in 2011. The wider catchment, which includes people living within a 20-minute drive of the Town Centre, has a population of c.550,000 which is +8% higher than in 2011. The growth in the local catchment was most significant between 2011 and 2015 with a plateau between 2015 and 2020.



Population Change by Catchment (2011 – 2020)  
Source: ONS Mid Year Population Estimates, 2020

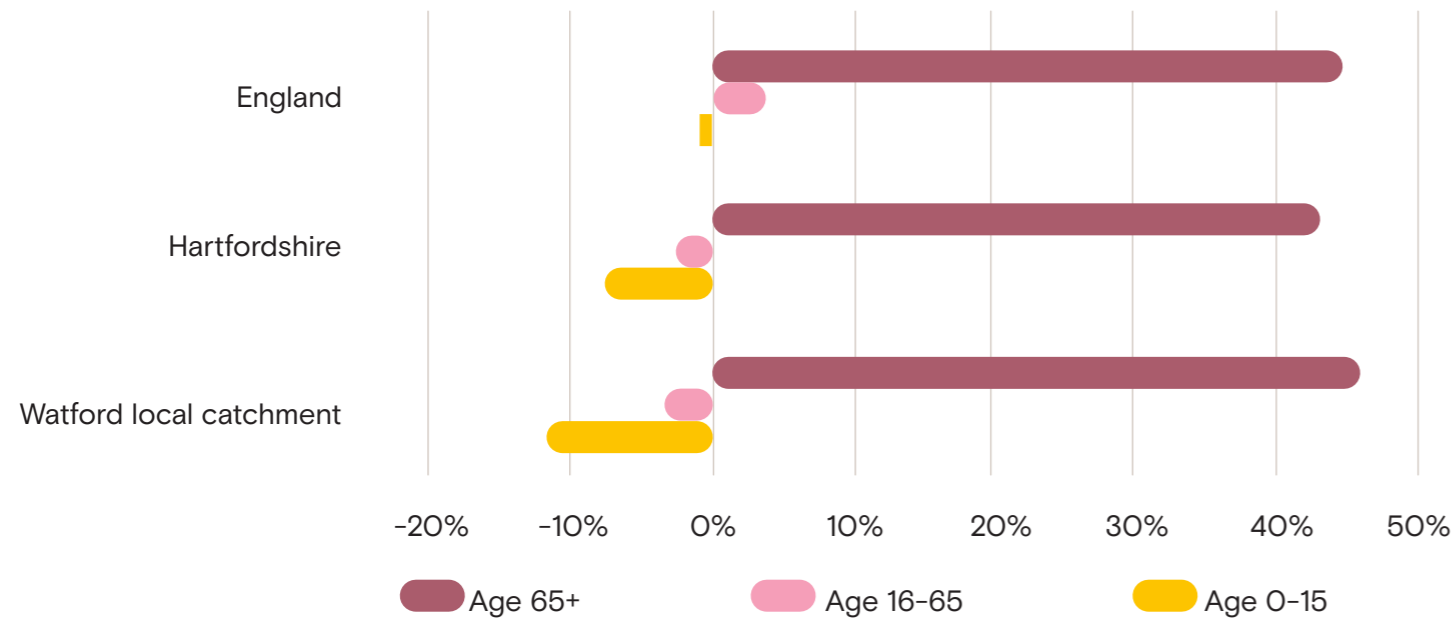
# Watford's Catchment

The local catchment is dominated by working age people, but population growth is expected to be highest among people aged 65+ over the next two decades...

The population profile of the Town Centre's local catchment is primarily characterised working age people between the ages of 30 and 50, as well as school-aged children. Unlike the wider catchment, which mirrors the national average, the local catchment has a high proportion of families but a much lower proportion of people aged 20-30 and over 65 versus the national average.

Over the next two decades the Office for National Statistics project that the local catchment will grow by +8% versus 2011, with growth expected to be largest among the over 65s. It is projected that younger population groups (Aged 16-64) will decline which is a concern for the local economy given the importance of this age group to the labour market. This could compound the current underrepresentation of people aged 20-30 which is already a risk to the local economy.

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Watford Projected Population Growth by Age Group (2018 – 2043)  
Source: ONS Population Projections, 2020

The Town Centre's local and wider catchments are relatively affluent although there are pockets of high deprivation close to the centre...

Watford Town Centre's local catchment has a broad occupational profile that is similar to the national profile, with around 30% of the working population in Professional and Managerial positions and c.33% of the population in lower skilled occupations .

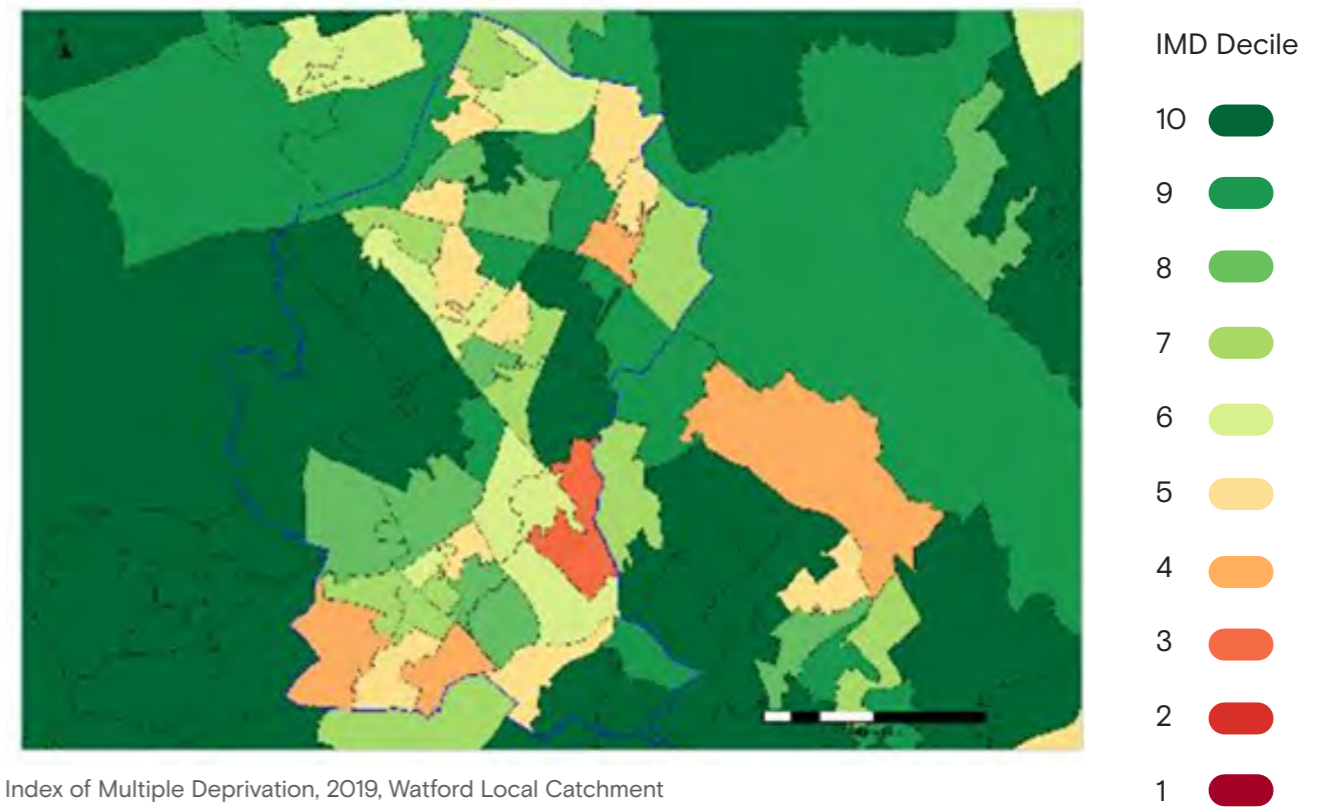
The local and wider catchments are relatively affluent and dominated by people classified by Experian as:

- 'Rental Hubs' – educated young people privately renting in urban neighbourhoods;
- 'Urban Cohesion' – residents of settled multi-cultural urban communities; and,
- 'Domestic Success' – high earning families bringing up children and following careers in sought after residential areas.

In the wider catchment area there is also a high proportion of people classified as 'Prestige Positions', which are established families with financial security living upmarket lifestyles. Stakeholders believe that

Watford Town Centre's current offer does not reflect the affluence of its local and wider catchment .

Despite this, there are also pockets of deprivation within the local catchment and especially close to the Town Centre. The main drivers of deprivation around the Town Centre include barriers to housing and services (the physical and financial accessibility of housing and local services), the quality of the local living environment (the quality of housing, air quality and road traffic accidents) and the level of crime (risk of personal and material victimisation).



Index of Multiple Deprivation, 2019, Watford Local Catchment  
Source: English Indices of Deprivation, MHCLG 2019

## Housing Stock

**The Town Centre's housing stock is dominated by flats, and the residential market is growing with a number of schemes coming forward...**

Watford's Town Centre has a mix of flats and houses to accommodate its local population, but the former dominate representing around 56% of units . Most other homes are terraced houses (26%) with few semi-detached or detached houses in and around the centre. The residential market in the centre is growing rapidly with several housing schemes coming forward. Across these schemes there is a skew to the provision of flats within mixed-use developments.

Interestingly the Town Centre has a higher proportion of one person households (42%) relative to Hertfordshire (28%) and England (30%). Most other homes are occupied by single families .

Linked to this, there is a strong incidence of private renting in the Town Centre (33%) which is considerably higher than national and Hertfordshire averages (17% and 13% respectively) . This likely reflects the cost of buying homes in Watford which are higher than the national and regional averages. About half of households in the Town Centre own their properties.

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	Watford TC	Hertfordshire	England
Owned	50%	69%	65%
Shared ownership (part of owned and part rented)	1%	1%	1%
Social rented	14%	17%	16%
Private rented	33%	13%	17%
Living rent free	1%	1%	1%

Housing Tenures in Watford Town Centre  
Source: NOMIS, 2011



Watford High Street

# ASSESSING THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT

# ASSESSING THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT

## The Character of Watford

Watford town centre comprises a series of characters, with activity focused around its High Street. These characters are not yet formalised but offer a starting point for the creation of character areas across the town centre.

### High Street

A retail core sits at the heart of the High Street, with commercial activity continuing along its length, and with three distinct characters along its length. The southern part of the High Street sits alongside the Atria shopping centre, and extends to Watford High Street station, though its connection is severed by Exchange Road. In the centre between Exchange Road flyover and Market Street sits a pedestrianised area with a different offer to that north of Exchange Road which is filled with a greater concentration of dining and bars. This stretches to Rickmansworth Road, where it links to the Town Hall via an underpass.

### Conservation Areas

A number of conservation areas sit in and around the town centre, each with their own unique characteristics that support the identity of Watford's built environment. These reflect a low-rise, yet compact urban form, that is predominantly residential. At the heart of the town centre sits the Grade I listed St Mary's church.

### Town Hall Campus

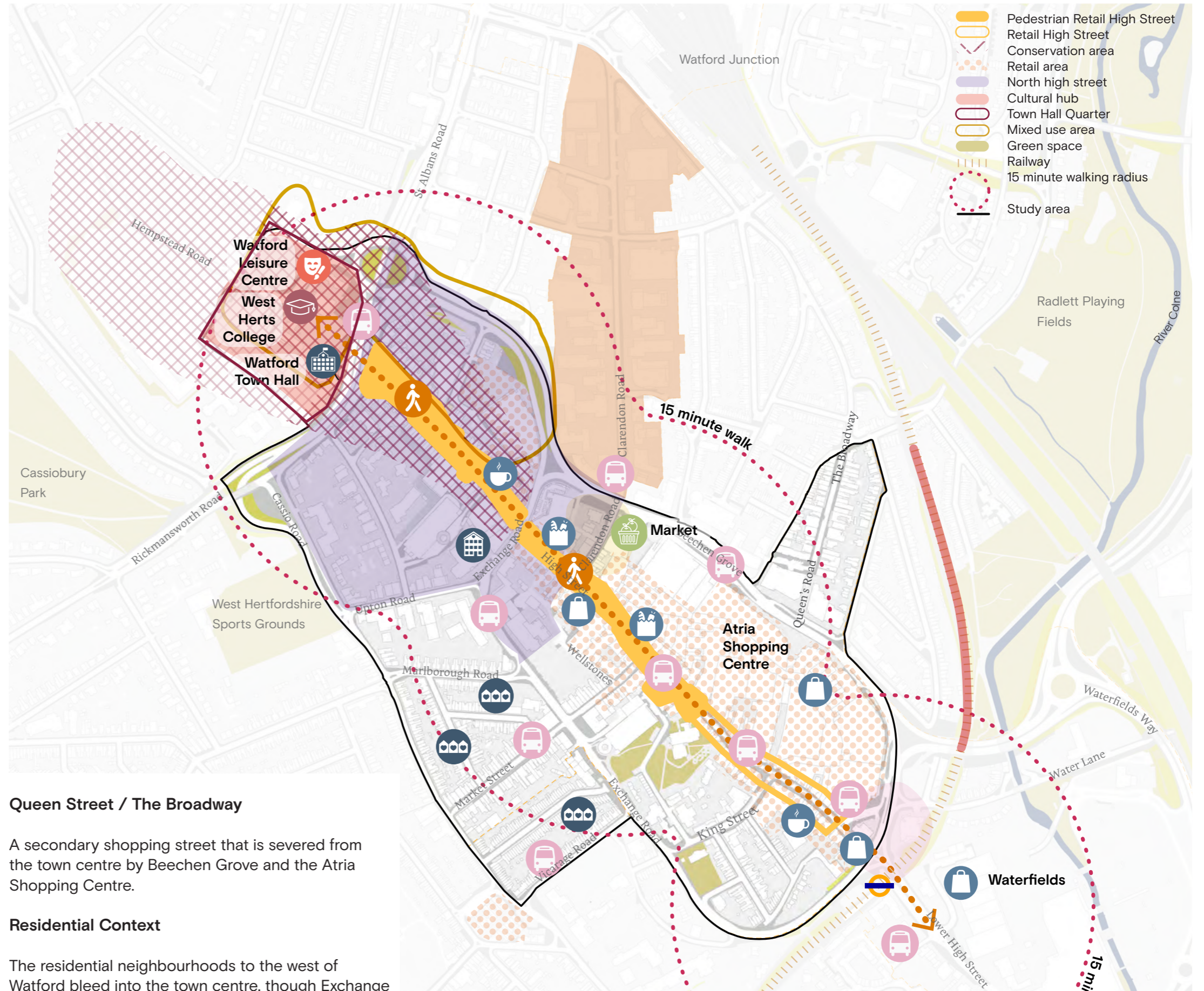
North of Rickmansworth Road sits the Town Hall, West Herts College, Watford Leisure Centre, and Watford Library. This area performs as a separate campus and is severed from the rest of the town centre by Rickmansworth Road.

### Market Street

A shopping street perpendicular to the High Street with a subsidiary provision for the town centre along a historic connection.

### Clarendon Road

Though not in the town centre itself, Clarendon Road provides an important context, dominated by office uses and providing the main connection to Watford Junction station, 'primary office location' for the sub-region.



### Queen Street / The Broadway

A secondary shopping street that is severed from the town centre by Beechen Grove and the Atria Shopping Centre.

### Residential Context

The residential neighbourhoods to the west of Watford bleed into the town centre, though Exchange Road provides a severance. Vicarage Road Stadium sits close by.

The character of Watford.

# Historic Town Centre Growth

Watford has been well established as an important town since its rapid expansion after the arrival of the Grand Junction Canal in 1798 and the London and Birmingham Railway in 1837.

The High Street has long been an established spine running through the town centre, providing the focus of local activity, with the Market Place at its heart.

As rail and road connections improved the town continued to expand. By 1925 the Metropolitan Railway (now London Underground) had been extended to Watford and its connectivity with London was further bolstered, with Watford sitting at the fringes of 'Metroland'. The houses from this era define much of the local landscape.

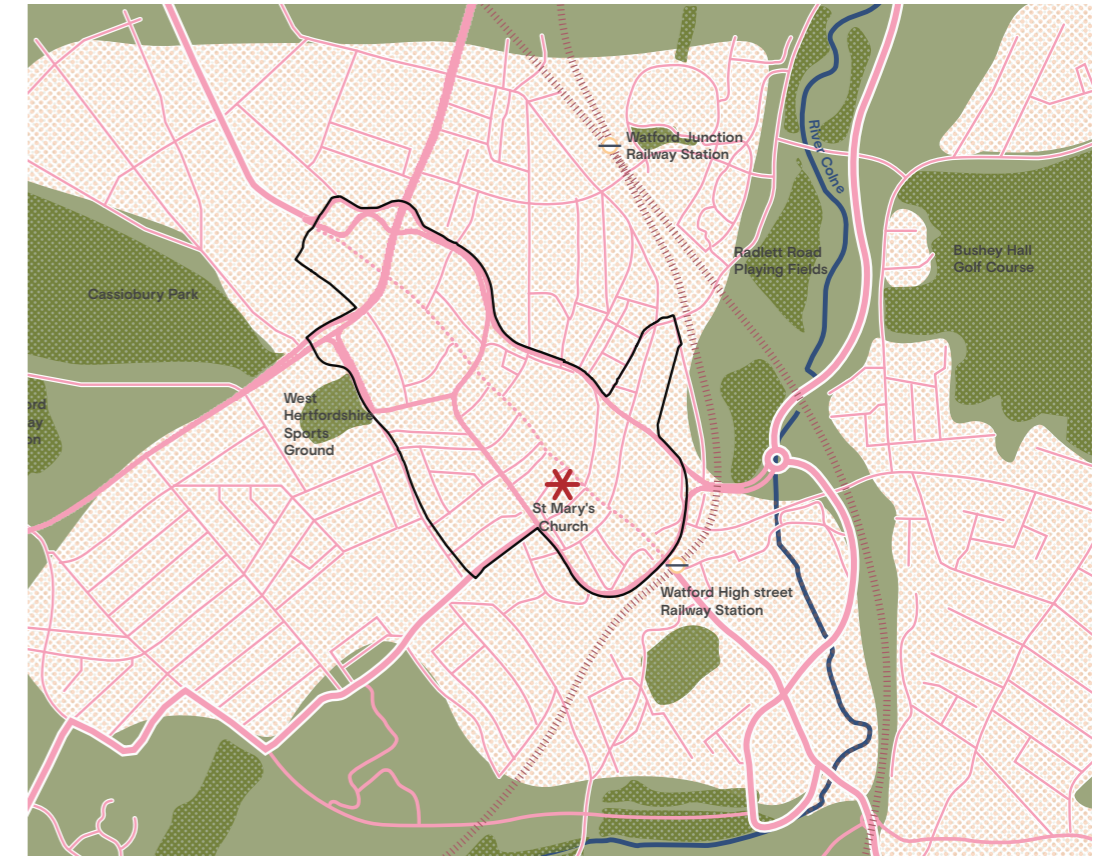
In 1959 the first section of the M1 opened close to Watford, and furthered this connectivity. The M25 opening in the 1980s set a further context of regional road connectivity to support its continued growth. The arrival of regional road infrastructure along Exchange Road and Beechen Grove provided further connectivity to the motorways, though severed the town centre from its immediate context.









1900



1960



2020

-  Urban Area
-  Park
-  Green and farmland
-  Roads
-  Railway
-  Study area



# Building Quality

The built environment of the town centre has been assessed from three perspectives:

- Building quality, outlining the current state and nature of the built stock in the town centre. This specifically speaks to the maintained quality of the building, with no specific assessment of the architectural aesthetic.
- Public realm quality, outlining the current usability and attractiveness of public spaces in the town centre
- Urban realm quality, outlining the nature and quality of urban realm definition and frontage in the town centre

Shown here is a map of the general commentary on the building quality in the town centre.

The overall condition of buildings along the High Street is positive, particularly at ground floor level thanks to their commercial frontage. However, some buildings are in poor condition, particularly noticeable on upper levels. Some locally listed buildings are also in poor condition, notably so at the southern end of the High Street.



# Urban Quality

Shown here is a map of frontages and plot definition, showing how well spaces are defined and fronted by the buildings that define them.

The High Street creates a strong urban condition, well defined by buildings on both sides, and positively fronted for the most part. Streets to the southwest of the High Street are also well defined, with a clearly defined urban grain, though around Exchange Road and Rosslyn Road the street definition deteriorates.

Beechen Grove and Exchange Road both create hostile environments for buildings to engage with, and as such are backed onto in most cases, with the Atria Shopping Centre providing an extensive blank frontage along Beechen Grove.



- Positive quality
- Neutral quality
- Negative quality
- Study area

Urban Quality Assessment

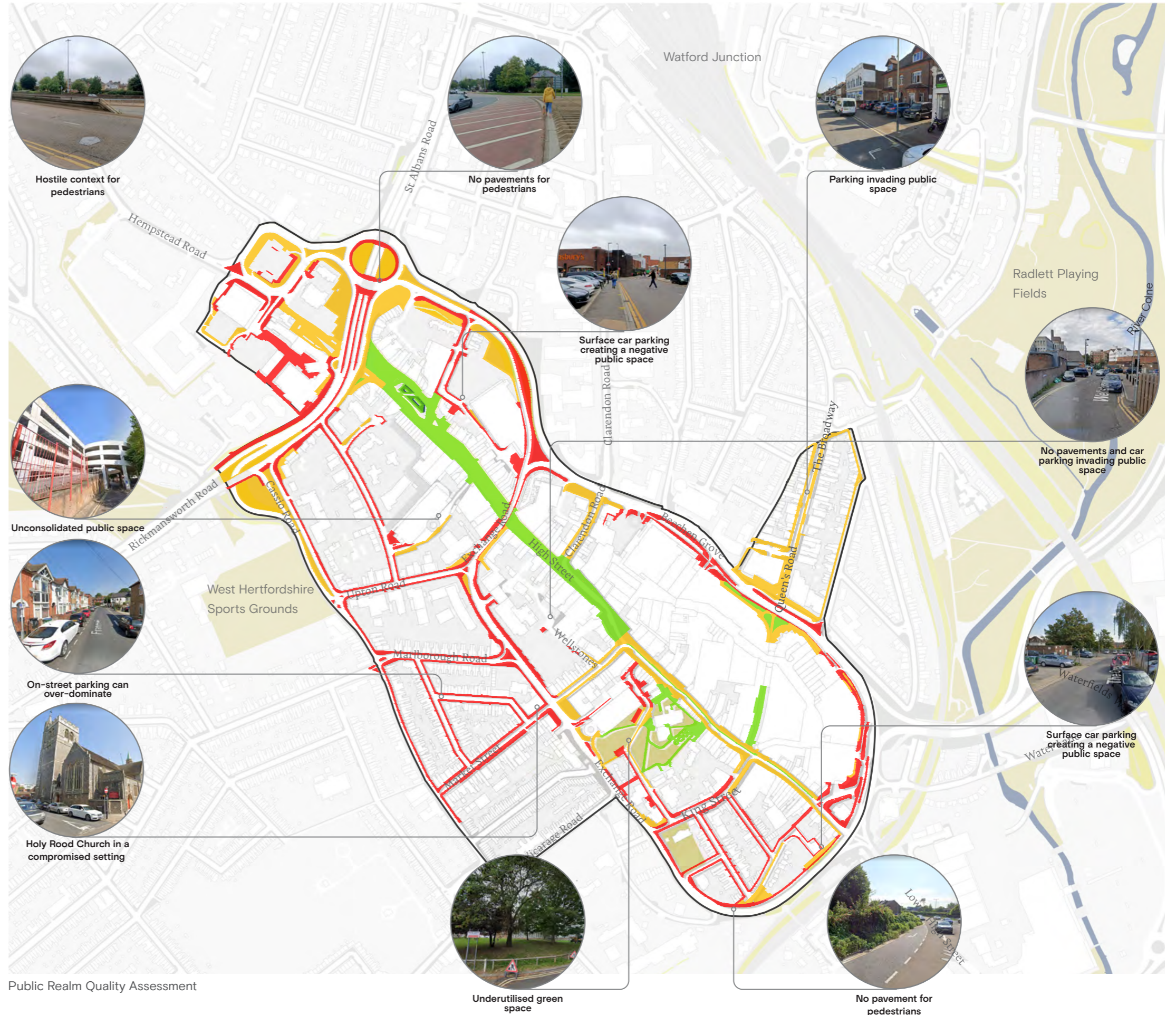
Overtly defensive edges create a negative urban condition

Overtly defensive edges create a negative urban condition

# Public Realm Quality

Various types of public spaces make up the town centre, including dedicated spaces, green spaces, and also pavements and routes. The quality and nature of these is assessed in the map.

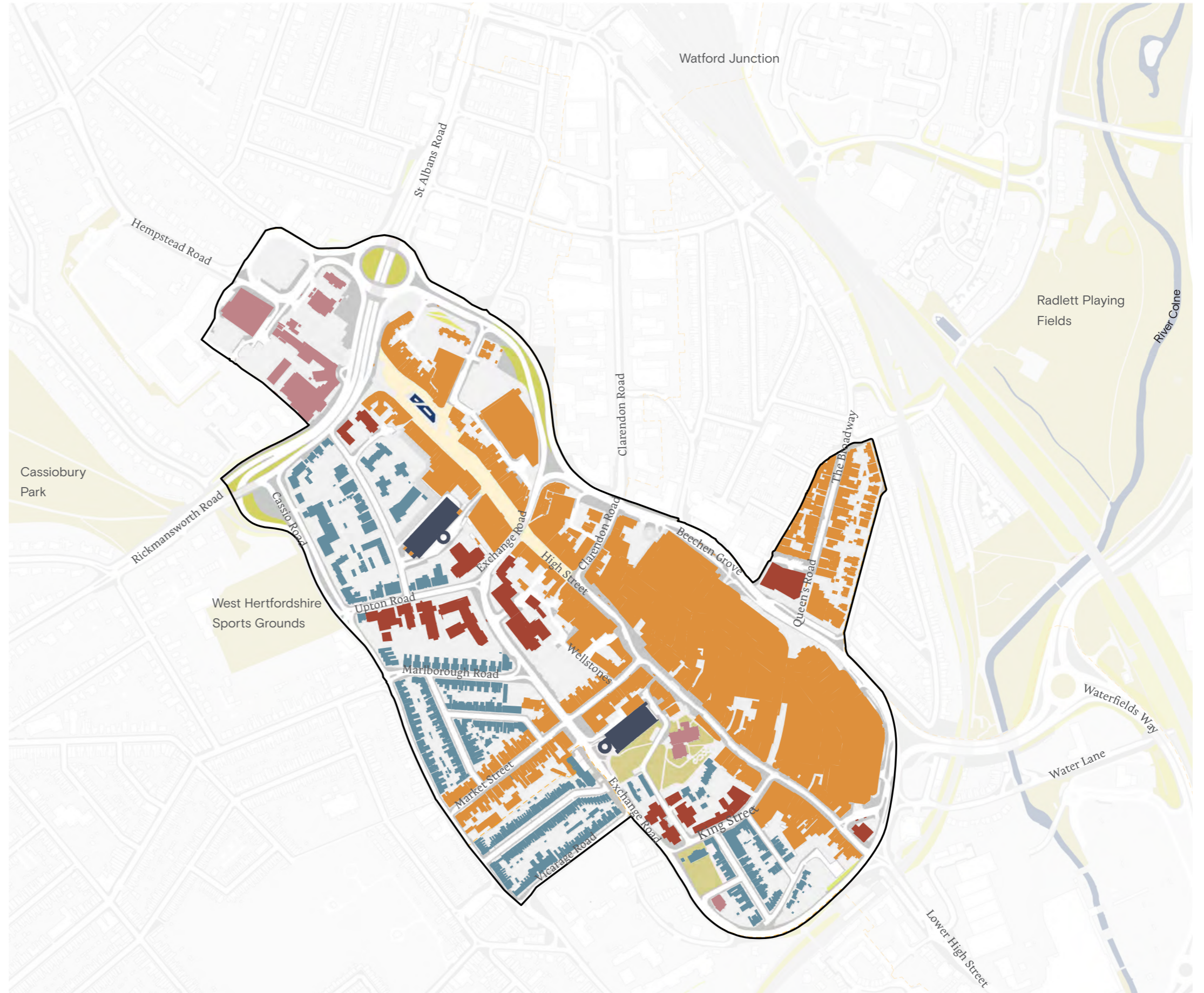
The High Street is an attractive, continuous public space at the heart of the town centre. Public space elsewhere in the town centre is somewhat compromised thanks to narrow pavements, car dominated streets, and a limited provision of green space. On the whole, it is the car-borne infrastructure which dominates, and aside from the High Street itself, little provision is offered for pedestrians either for walking through the town centre, or dwelling within it.



## Ground floor uses

Various types of ground floor uses make up the town centre, including commercial, residential, retail, civic and parking.

Retail and related commercial activities dominate at the heart of the town centre, focused predominantly along the High Street, but also along Market Street and The Broadway. The town hall campus to the north is a collection of civic and community buildings, whilst to the west predominantly residential uses blend into the neighbourhoods beyond.



Ground Floor Uses

- Residential
- Employment
- Commercial
- Civic
- Parking garage
- Study Area

# Surface assessment

In addition to the assessment of public spaces and buildings, a review of the surfaces and built form has been undertaken.

Highway infrastructure dominates the town centre and takes a large proportion of its footprint. The darker colours represent the highways that are least passable by foot.

By contrast, the built form and morphology of the town centre represents a tight fabric with intimate streets and spaces.



Public surfaces



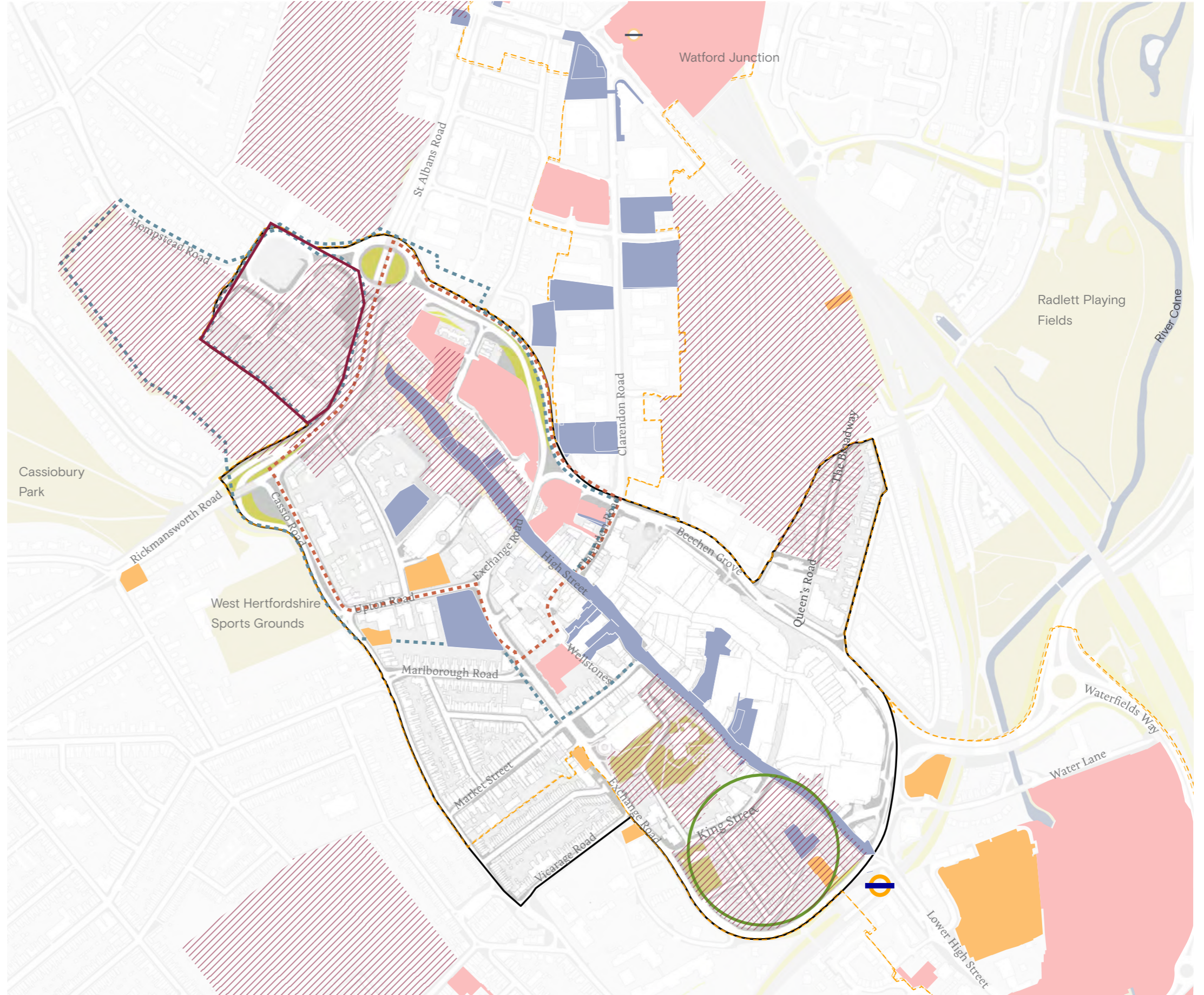
Buildings and privately owned space

- Pedestrian
- Pavement
- Road verge
- Vehicular road surface
- Highway road surface
- Accessible green space
- Buildings
- Private outdoor surface
- Study Area

# Emerging context

Watford is currently seeing developments coming forwards in and around the town centre. A few key points in response to this:

- Site allocations reflect interest in redevelopment, and further sites have also suggested interest in redevelopment
- The Market site is considered a potential redevelopment asset, potentially in coordination with the rest of the block
- Proposals along Exchange Road have struggled with how to engage positively with the road, particularly at ground level.
- Town Hall campus masterplan is currently being progressed
- Sainsbury's site has development potential
- PRYZM site is actively being considered for redevelopment



Emerging Context

- Planning Applications
- Allocated Sites For Delivery: Housing
- Allocated Sites For Delivery: Mixed
- Allocated Sites For Delivery: Employment
- Town Hall Quarter
- North high Street Masterplan
- Cultural Hub Masterplan
- Town Centre Sustainable Transport Hub
- ▨ Conservation Areas
- Heritage Park/Garden
- Green Space
- Core Strategic Development Area
- Study Area

# Sustainable Watford

## CONTEXT

### Wider Context

Climate change is the biggest challenge we face and it is happening here and now. It has already resulted in increased frequency of heatwaves in most world regions and heavy precipitation events, which contribute to flooding. The predicted future impact of increased frequency and magnitude of events as well as the multiplicity of such events having a cascading and compounding effect is a significant challenge for future sustainable development.

- According to the UN Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) 2021 report, the world will probably reach or exceed 1.5 °C of warming within just the next two decades.
- The World Economic Forum 2020 (WEF) identified Climate Action Failure and Extreme Weather as one of the greatest global risks.
- The UN Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 13 requires member states to “take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts”. The goal includes targets like strengthening resilience and adaptive capacities, integrating climate change measures into policies and improving education, awareness and human institutional capacity on climate change.
- Nature is declining globally at rates unprecedented in human history, as reported by the Intergovernmental Panel on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Service (IPBES) in its global assessment on the state of the world’s biodiversity and ecosystem services.
- The UK passed the Climate Change Act 2008 (2050 Target Amendment) Order 2019 which commits the UK to reducing emissions to net zero by 2050.

### Watford Context

As set out in the Watford Sustainability Strategy 2020-2023, there are key considerations directly relevant to the Framework:

- The Borough’s 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. (Data source: UK National Atmospheric Emissions Inventory 2017).
- Public Health England estimates that in Hertfordshire 514 people prematurely die each year as a result of ultra-fine particulate matter alone. The main pollutants of interest in the Borough continue to be NO2 and PM10 particulates. These are mainly associated with road traffic.
- Watford has a total of 18.2% tree canopy cover. (Data source: urbantreecover.org).
- Watford has 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. The only publically accessible green space within the town centre is the St Mary’s Church green space.
- The River Colne runs through Watford and Water Lane, Lower High Street and Waterfields Way has had several incidents of flooding during heavy rainfall.



Flooding on Lower High Street, Watford forced multi-day street closure. 2014

### THREE ASPECTS OF SUSTAINABILITY

Climate resilience and sustainability is a global challenge that encompasses economic and social considerations in addition to traditional environmental concerns. The onset of climate change is already having significant impacts upon our society and economy and without effective mitigation and adaptation action, climate change will continue to have far-reaching negative social and economic consequences.

In order to create a truly sustainable and resilient development it is essential that these three aspects are addressed.



The three aspects of sustainability: Environment, society and economy and how they interact.

### OPPORTUNITY

The Watford Strategic Framework provides a valuable opportunity to outline the systemic interventions and strategies that could be used to meet wider sustainability goals. In particular it provides the opportunity to:

- Have an **impact** in meeting the Climate Action Plan targets in relation to a reduction of carbon emissions in the town centre.
- Deliver **systemic changes** that will provide multiple benefits and which encapsulate environmental, economic and social themes.
- Create an **equitable society** which offers greater opportunity to more organisations and people.
- Surpass sustainability and create a **regenerative model** in which processes restore, renew or revitalize their own sources of energy and materials.

# MOVEMENT



# MOVEMENT

## Public transport, highways and active travel

Watford is currently well connected by regional highways, rail, Overground, Underground and buses. An extent of key local connectivity is outlined here.

### Public transport

Watford Junction is the principal railway station, with direct connections to London and Birmingham, with infrequent services to St Albans.

Watford sits at the edge of the London Transport network with direct links to central London on the Metropolitan Line and London Overground.

Railway connections are primarily northwest-southeast, with limited connections southwest-northeast (orbitally around London).

Local bus routes pick up connections to nearby town centres, with many routes congregating at Watford Junction station.

### Highways

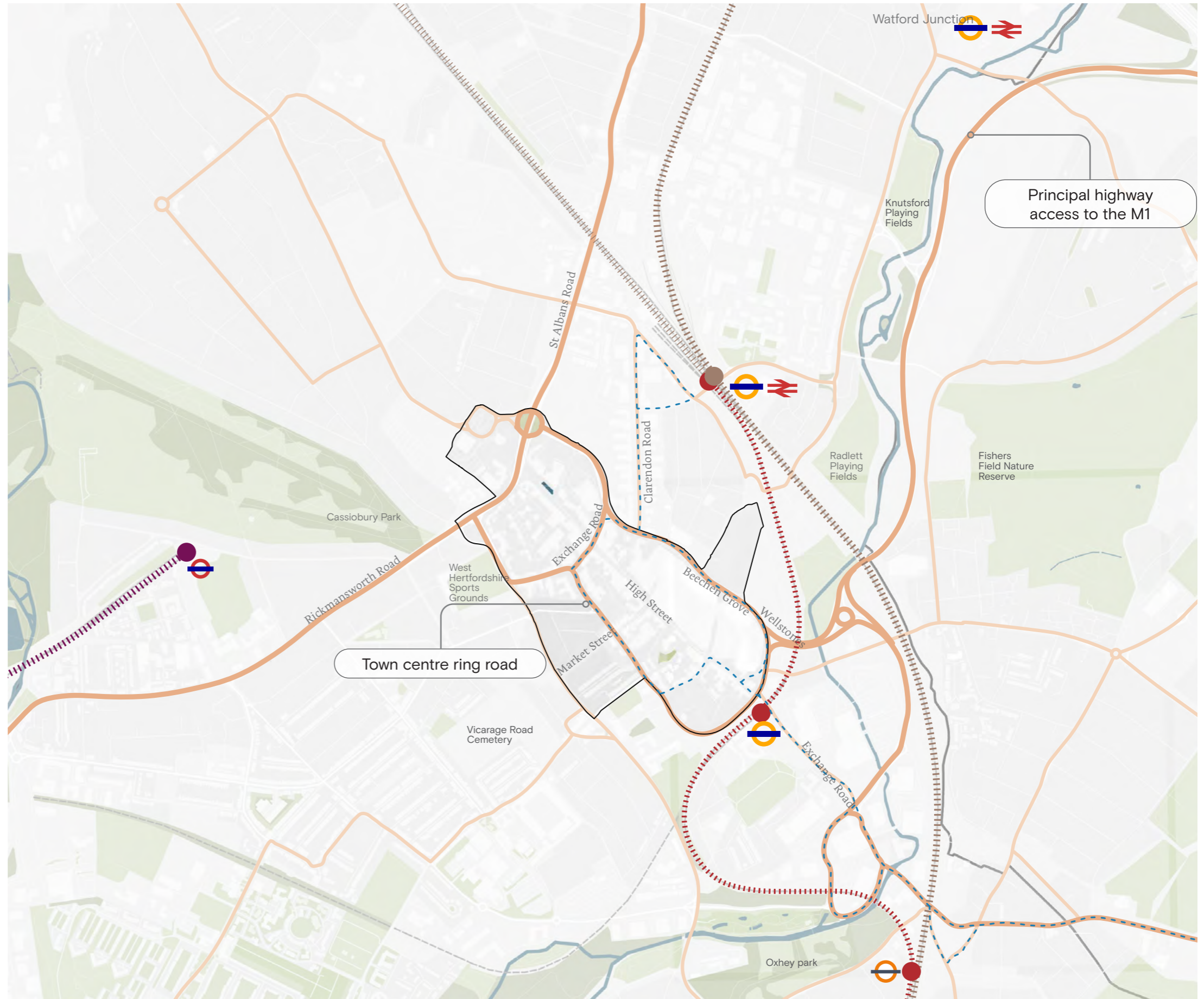
Watford sits near to both the M25 and M1 motorways, and has direct highway connectivity to the M1 via the A4008.

A one-way ring road exists around the town centre.

### Active travel

Walking and cycling access to the town centre is compromised by the dominance of highway infrastructure, particularly the ring road. The High Street is partially pedestrianised and provides the most attractive walking route. Walking connections to nearby parks from the town centre are also compromised by highway infrastructure.

Plans are underway within WBC to improve walking and cycling routes, and the Framework draws on this as a starting point for further enhancement.



Public transport, highways and active travel

# Parking

Set out here are the known usage statistics from car parks across the town centre. Overall, car parking is split between private and public car parks and the statistics shown illustrate only a portion of this total parking. Below is a summary of the findings:

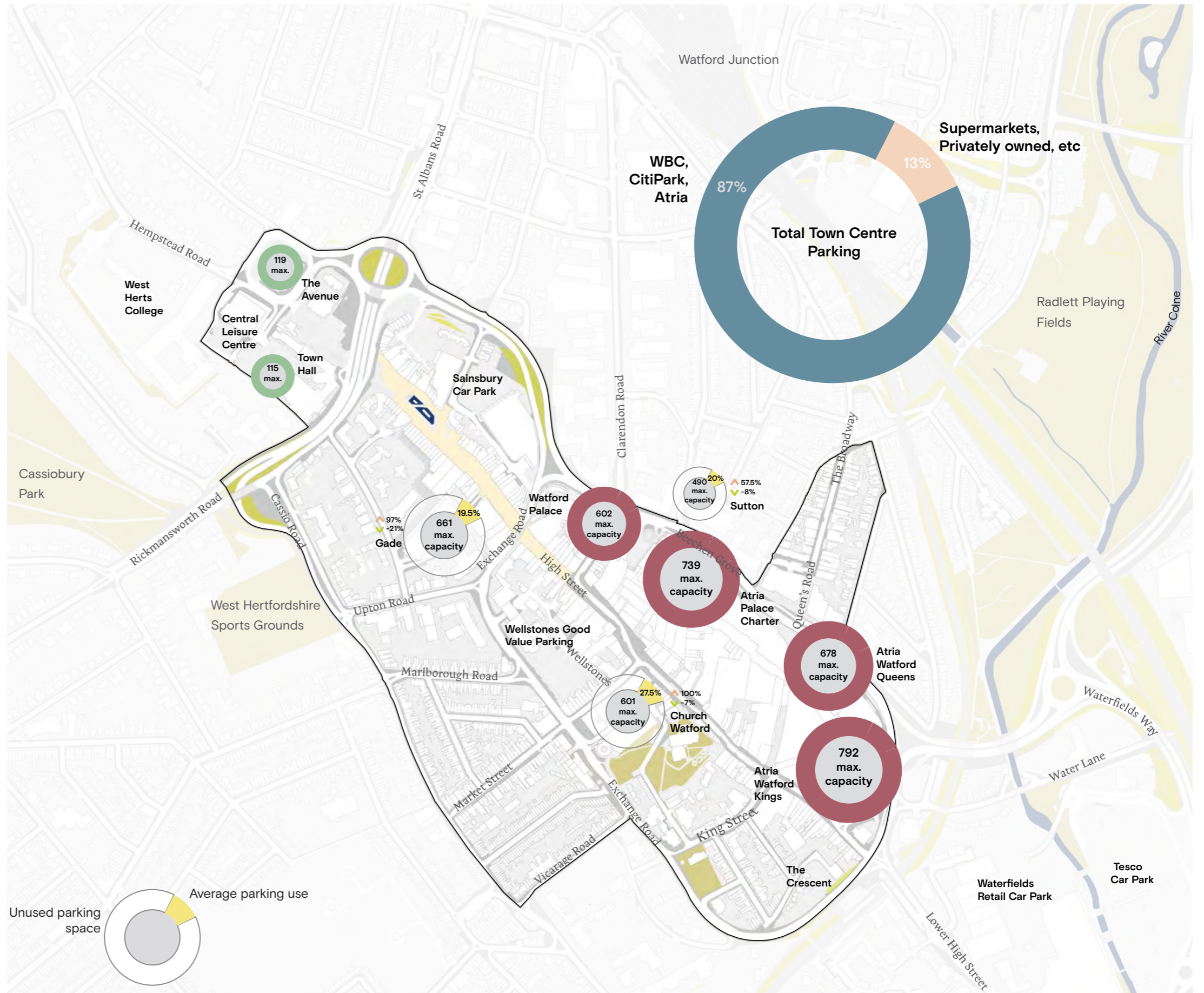
- Average use statistics for Gade and Church Street car parks suggest there is excess capacity.
- No official usage data for Atria car parks, though anecdotally Kings and Queens car parks are better used than the others, and there is potentially excess capacity.
- There generally appears to be an over-provision of town centre car parking, evidenced by the fact that the Gade, Church and Sutton parking lots all have an average use of approximately 22,3%.
- Access to Gade car park is convoluted thanks to the one way system.
- Access to car parks is predominantly via the ring road. The ring road acts as a roundabout and thus generates traffic comprising users searching for parking.
- Atria car parks facilitate direct access to the shopping centre without needing to engage with the rest of the town centre or High Street.

## Recommendation

- A town centre car parking strategy is required to assess the total current need for car parking, in relation to the sustainable transport strategy.



— Study Area



Parking. Source: Town Centre Car Parks - Operational Reports

# Town Centre Highways

A large proportion of Watford Town Centre is designated as highway land, shown here in this Hertfordshire County Council highway boundary map.

In particular cases, such as along Rickmansworth Road, at Rickmansworth roundabout, and along parts of Beechen Grove, there is a noticeably generous proportion of land associated with the highway, which could be considered for recalibration, resulting in the release of developable land. Preliminary investigations indicate that approximately 1ha of space could be made available for redevelopment around Rickmansworth roundabout.



Town Centre Highways. Source: Hertfordshire County Council

— Dedicated highways land  
 Study Area

# KEY FINDINGS

# KEY FINDINGS

## SWOT Analysis

### STRENGTHS

- Strong sense of characters along the High Street bringing a recognisable identity to the town centre
- Strong, direct and rapid public transport connections with central London and other important economic hubs (e.g. Birmingham, Northampton, Rugby and Milton Keynes)
- Diverse and varied town centre mix underpinned by strong retail anchors that continue to drive footfall (e.g. Apple store, Next, Clarks, Flannels, M&S, Primark Apple Store)
- Buoyant retail market with high levels of enquiries, low vacancy rates and strong rental rates
- Important economy, home to c.1,500 business and 29,000 employees, which underpins the wider borough economy
- Strong and unique specialisms in higher-value sectors such as Professional, Scientific & Technical Activities and Information & Communication Services
- Important office location which is evolving through new schemes, additional floorspace and high-profile re-development/renovations
- Large local and wider catchment dominated by working age people and families with above average household incomes
- Significant number of housing-led mixed-use schemes coming forward which will address the need for more housing in and around the town centre
- The Atria Shopping Centre is a major attractor for the town/Watford

### WEAKNESSES

- Town centre mix has gaps, particularly around independent retail, high-end retail, fresh produce (e.g. bakers, butchers, cheesemongers, delis) and experiences
- Many town centre units have large floorplates and high rents, deterring some independent businesses from opening. Some are also low quality and require significant investment to activate
- Visitor experience could be improved by enhancing accessibility, pedestrian movement, streetscape, public seating, biodiversity and the diversity and frequency of events
- Lack of high quality office stock is limiting inward investment and employment has declined over the last five years
- Local economy is not as entrepreneurial as it could be, which may link to a lack of low-cost incubator-type workspace for start-ups and entrepreneurs. The town is also well-connected to London which has a wide range of commercial premises for occupiers to choose from
- Clarendon Road, the main office 'district', lacks a brand, identity, amenities and attractive business environment
- Most major employers (e.g. Watford Borough Council, PwC, KMPG, Ralph Lauren, Watford General Hospital) are around rather than within the centre, and are severed from the core by the ring road and poor pedestrian accessibility
- Persistently high levels of deprivation in pockets of the centre that have not been addressed despite significant local investment in recent decades
- Ring road is a barrier to active travel movement and exacerbates traffic
- 'Back' conditions along streets behind the high street, such as Wellstones, create an awkward public realm
- The Atria shopping centre creates a negative urban condition along Beechen Grove

### OPPORTUNITIES

- Opportunity to re-characterise the main roads to create a more attractive environment for pedestrians and for new development
- Opportunity to support the ambitions of the sustainable transport strategy with public realm enhancements and improved links
- Opportunity to diversify the retail-dominated core by introducing other uses (e.g. housing, workspace, leisure etc) to meet demand and build resilience
- Offer can be diversified to better meet the needs of high earning and financially secure families ('Domestic Success' and 'Prestige Positions') in the local and wider catchment
- Wide range of sites and assets that could be re-developed or adapted to provide high-quality uses that meet demand, diversify the town centre and improve the centre's appearance and function
- Can build on, celebrate and exploit Watford's history and assets through complementary experiences and events (e.g. Harry Potter Studio Tour, Watford Football Club and the town's history in paper making)
- High proportion of young educated renters ('Rental Hubs') in the local and wider catchment presents a market niche that the housing market can build on
- Significant population growth expected among people aged over 65+ presents opportunities to provide alternative accommodation types to meet their needs and free up family homes for working-age people
- Shift in demand from inner-city housing and workspace to well-connected, affordable and liveable suburbs presents opportunities for Watford's residential and commercial markets
- Opportunity and need to tackle deprivation challenges (e.g. related to housing and crime) as part of future redevelopment and regeneration schemes in the centre
- Car parks are underutilised and there is potential to consolidate and redevelop

### THREATS

- Town centre mix dominated by at-risk chain retailers over in-demand independents leaving it vulnerable to the macro-economic shifts
- Significant investment will be required to Atria to help it adapt to ever-changing consumer demand given its size and scale
- Much of Atria is undercover, which is becoming less popular with consumers particularly in a post-pandemic world and as
- Decline in the Professional, Scientific & Technical and Information & Communication sectors is a major threat to the local economy and town centre vitality
- Opening of HS2 and Crossrail may increase the attractiveness of other office locations versus Watford, particularly if the quality and diversity of office stock remains poor
- Expected growth in people aged 65+ will impact the number of working-age people living locally (and therefore the labour market and economy) if appropriate alternative accommodation is not provided
- High take up of the Government's furlough scheme illustrates the vulnerability of the local economy to fluctuations and changes. This may link to the high proportion of roles in Watford's retail, hospitality and leisure sectors – all of which were hit hard by the pandemic
- The changing nature of work may lead some major employers, particularly on Clarendon Road to reduce office floorspace leased (there are two major lease breaks coming forward in the next five years)
- The nature of highways in the town centre, such as Exchange Road are threatening opportunities for development as they are hostile environments at ground level

# Positives & Negatives

A shortlist of photographs to demonstrate some of the key findings from around Watford – both positive and negative.

## Urban definition



Well-defined and activated street scene  
High Street

## Public spaces



Central, positive space lined with trees  
High Street

## Buildings

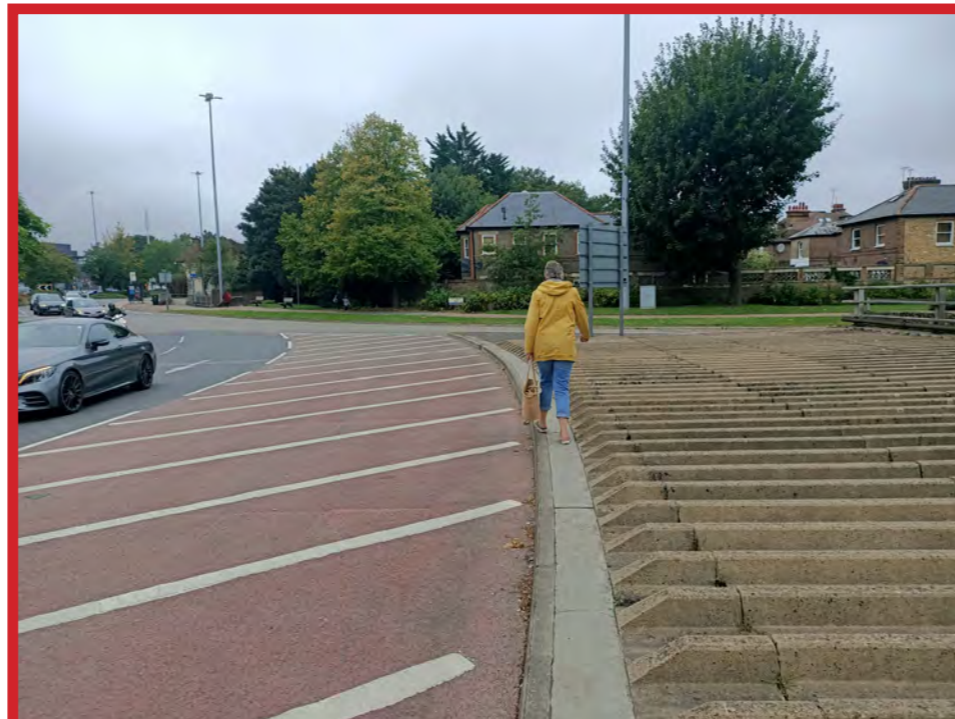


Heritage assets throughout the town centre  
St Mary's Church

Page 46



The town centre's compromised relationship with the context  
Beechen Grove entrance to Watford Market



Highways as a barrier to the town centre  
Rickmansworth Road



Compromised back conditions behind the High Street  
Wellstones

# Issues with Watford Town Centre that can be responded to through the framework

## ISSUE 1: VULNERABILITY TO CHANGE

The town centre is functioning relatively well but needs to improve resilience in relations to macro-economic changes

A key vulnerability is the over-representation of chain retail at expense of independents of chain retail versus independents, services and leisure uses. Positively, this has started to shift over the last year with the introduction of some new leisure activities in the town centre

### Strategic & policy context

Policy implications of structural changes in retail industry are to encourage diversity of uses, with less reliance on chain retail.

National policy allows more flexibility in change of use.

The new Local Plan supports increased leisure, and food and beverage provision.

### Engagement results

On average, people feel that the Town Centre serves them fairly well (3.3/5). They are generally satisfied with the range of commercial, retail, leisure and food and beverage options available, but more independent shops would increase the attractiveness of the Town Centre.

The current location of the Market is not ideal, but the food stalls are popular. People felt that the Market could be enlivened by providing a greater variety of stalls, and more events, with opportunities to showcase local talent.

## ISSUE 2: BUILDING FORM AND CHARACTER

The domestic scale of the High Street is part of Watford's character and is worth protecting – Watford Place Shaping Panel

Heritage assets sit in compromised settings and could be made more visible Many assets are in need of attention or repair to fully reach their potential.

### Strategic & policy context

The new Local Plan contains relevant policies for the Town Centre:

- Sensitively located and designed residential development
- Active frontages on the ground floor
- Base building height of five storeys; justification to be provided for higher buildings
- Protection of heritage assets

### Engagement results

There were a number of comments from the social media survey regarding the loss of the town's heritage and replacement of historic/character buildings with modern high rise. Comments also included requests for the town's historic character to be recognised.

## ISSUE 3: MOVEMENT

Ring road is a barrier. Watford is dominated by cars and vehicles and their infrastructure, compromising the use of other modes and creating hostile & unattractive environments. There is an under provision of active travel infrastructure, discouraging its use, with poor connectivity of cycling infrastructure

### Strategic & policy context

The new Local Plan encourages development proposals that will reduce the dominance of vehicles on the ring road, provide active frontages to the road, and encourage active travel.

The 'Transforming Travel in Watford' strategy proposes:

- Making it easier to get across the ring road by improving existing pedestrian and cycle crossings, and creating new ones
- proving provision for buses and cycling on the ring road
- exploring the creation of a sustainable transport hub in the Town Centre, which will make it easier to switch between bus, cycling and pedestrian travel.

The Local Walking and Cycling Improvement Plan (LCWIP) includes a number of proposals to extend and improve walking and cycling routes around and to, the town centre.

## Engagement results

More than 80% of respondents to Watford's Transforming Travel in Watford survey believed it was important that we change our transport network to help combat climate change.

Many people commented negatively on the ring road, and noted challenges for pedestrians and cyclists at existing crossing points, e.g. at Albert Street, Beechen Grove, St Albans Rd and Rickmansworth Road. Disability groups find crossing the ring road particularly challenging.

Landowners/investors see it as a barrier to access for pedestrians.

Respondents to the social media survey felt that the Town Centre is too 'traffic heavy' with a real feeling of lack of appropriate accessible and reliable alternative means of transport to access the town centre.

One respondent commented that the traffic lights at the blue pyramid building are dangerous for pedestrians.

Improved public transport links was the third highest priority for improvement that Commonplace respondents said would encourage them to use the town centre more.

'Getting around' was the fifth highest priority for social media survey respondents. Comments included requests to improve cycling and walking access.

## ISSUE 4: PUBLIC SPACES

Poor quality spaces and perceptions of spaces that could better relate to adjacent buildings. Limited spaces to dwell and for public arts and events. Pedestrian space and route legibility is compromised, such as along pavements and back streets at Wellstones and Gaumont. There is a lack of greening in the town centre, and a lack of usable and attractive green space, such as around Church Street

### Strategic & policy context

The new Local Plan encourages development proposals that will improve the public realm, contribute to clear and co-ordinated way finding, and enhance linkages to key green spaces such as Cassiobury Park and the proposed Colne River linear park.

The Green Infrastructure Plan proposes the following projects for the Town Centre:

- Improve green access links from Town Centre to key assets, such as Oxhey Park, Cassiobury Park and the Colne River Valley
- Enhance functionality and adaptation to climate change of incidental green spaces such as St Mary's Churchyard and Watford Fields
- Additional tree planting to create a green spine, linking to Cassiobury Park and the Colne River Valley
- Ensure green links to major development sites such as Watford Junction
- Create small scale community-led green space initiatives
- Local play provision – natural play

### Engagement results

Along the High Street, Commonplace respondents were broadly complimentary about the public realm amenity, although public space in the north of the High Street was in need of a greater number and range of public events to help enliven these spaces. Public realm at the south end of the high street is of poorer quality due to lack of investment.

The Church of St. Marys Square received a number of comments that, while generally negative, were focussed on perceptions of use of this space for antisocial behaviour, and there was an identification of this space as an asset to the Town Centre that would benefit from improvement as a peaceful contrast to the adjacent High Street.

Comments from social media survey:

“The town centre should be a place to meet with family/friends in a clean, pleasant environment with a spot of shopping with maybe a coffee and cake”

“Making Watford a green, safe, comfortable place to be with good access, places to sit, places to meet with friends”

All groups interviewed suggested more places to sit and dwell, perhaps with some covered areas, and more activities. Young people, in particular, were keen to see the Market and the Colosseum as venues to showcase local art and performance talent

## ISSUE 5: ENVIRONMENTAL

Noisy and aggressive conditions along busy roads. Watford is not yet zero-carbon. The town centre does not yet fully capitalise on the potential of biodiversity enhancement and SuDS

### Strategic & policy context

Watford Borough Council declared a climate emergency in 2019, with a commitment to become a net carbon neutral borough by 2030.

The Local Plan encourages development that:

- contributes to achieving the net zero target
- is energy and water efficient
- uses sustainable construction and low carbon/renewable energy technologies
- achieves relevant BREEAM standards (non-residential development)
- requires less car parking and provides EV and cycle infrastructure
- achieves a minimum 10% biodiversity net gain
- incorporates Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SUDS).

Note: SUDS can help to achieve the 10% biodiversity net gain requirement

### Engagement results

This was not included as a specific question in the Commonplace survey, but some respondents commented, e.g.

“Reducing traffic in Watford would be an important contribution to combating climate change”

“Watford needs to contribute to being greener and sustainability”

“Nature connection is fundamental to our wellbeing”

“Community makes Watford special, it would be wonderful for the residents and the planet if it was more green/eco”

“The most important thing is to make us more sustainable”

Suggestions from face to face engagement included:

- incorporation of sustainable features, such as solar panels and wind turbines.
- a community garden to increase biodiversity
- places for re-wilding

A suggestion from the business stakeholder workshop was to consider the introduction of a low emission zone.



## ISSUE 6: SOCIAL

There is an underrepresentation of people aged 20–30 living in Watford Town Centre and its surrounds, limiting the vibrancy of the town centre and labour market. Pockets of high deprivation, driven by barriers to housing/services, liveability and crime. Safety concerns for pedestrians in areas lacking in passive surveillance, such as underpasses. No consensus on future of night-time economy.

### Strategic & policy context

The Council Plan aims to achieve 'prosperity with purpose'.

The National Planning Policy Framework includes a social objective to support strong, vibrant and healthy communities, by ensuring that a sufficient number and range of homes can be provided ....with accessible services and open spaces that reflect current and future needs and support communities' health, social and cultural wellbeing.

### Engagement results

Comment from social media survey:

- “Town centre is for younger people, 50 plus not catered for”
- There were some comments on community and diversity, such as:
- “we need to unite our diverse, vibrant community more than ever to represent modern Watford”
- “The town centre is important not only financially but as a centre of community”
- “Watford belongs to all of us, it needs to be inclusive”
- “There’s not much to do beyond eating and clubbing so need options for all ages”

Feedback from face to face meetings suggested that Watford needs to embrace its culture more, with a greater variety of small festivals

## ISSUE 7: ECONOMY

Watford town centre plays an important role in the borough’s economy and has strong and unique specialisms in Professional, Scientific & Technical Activities and Information & Communications Services. Employment in the town centre has, however, fallen in the last five years which is thought to reflect the high levels of re-development on Clarendon Road and the loss of above retail office space in the core town centre – this demonstrates the dependence of the local economy on its business space. There are also relatively low levels of entrepreneurialism which may link to a general lack of dedicated workspace for entrepreneurs and start up businesses.

The retail, hospitality and leisure sectors also play an important role in the town centre economy. All of these are under threat from changing macro-economic trends across the three markets, as well as the cost of living crisis which is hitting these sectors hard due to rising energy and staffing costs.

### Strategic & policy context

Watford’s Cultural Strategy (2019) highlights the need to improve the range of facilities for creative industries, which could strengthen Watford’s cultural offer. This could include the provision of exhibition or studio space on the ground floor of new developments or in stand-alone spaces.

The Local Plan recognises Clarendon Rd as the primary office location and also seeks to protect employment uses in the Town Centre.

Appendix 4 to the Local Plan sets out the marketing requirements for change of use.

### Engagement results

The Local Plan consultation identified the need for provision of more flexible workspace in the Borough. This was echoed by the comments from face to face engagement:

- physical space for exchange and learning for start-ups, including digital start-ups, would be an important attractor for young, innovative businesses.
- there is a lack of affordable creative space
- business stakeholders agreed there is a need for an artisan offer, and to encourage more independents and creatives, with a greater availability of start-up space.

Landowners and investors felt that there should be a clear brand and identity for Clarendon Rd, but there should also be an opportunity to diversify the offer to include some residential and smaller office floor plates.

Numerous comments from the Framework engagement about the lack of visibility of the Market but many positive suggestions to improve it, with more events and opportunities to showcase local artists and performers.

# Capacity for Change

In assessing the situation across the town centre, an assessment of potential areas of change has been undertaken. These have potential for positive change, reflecting on current development interest and likelihood for change. This map identifies potential opportunities associated with future development or refurbishment. It does not define specific development proposals.

## Potential sites for intervention:

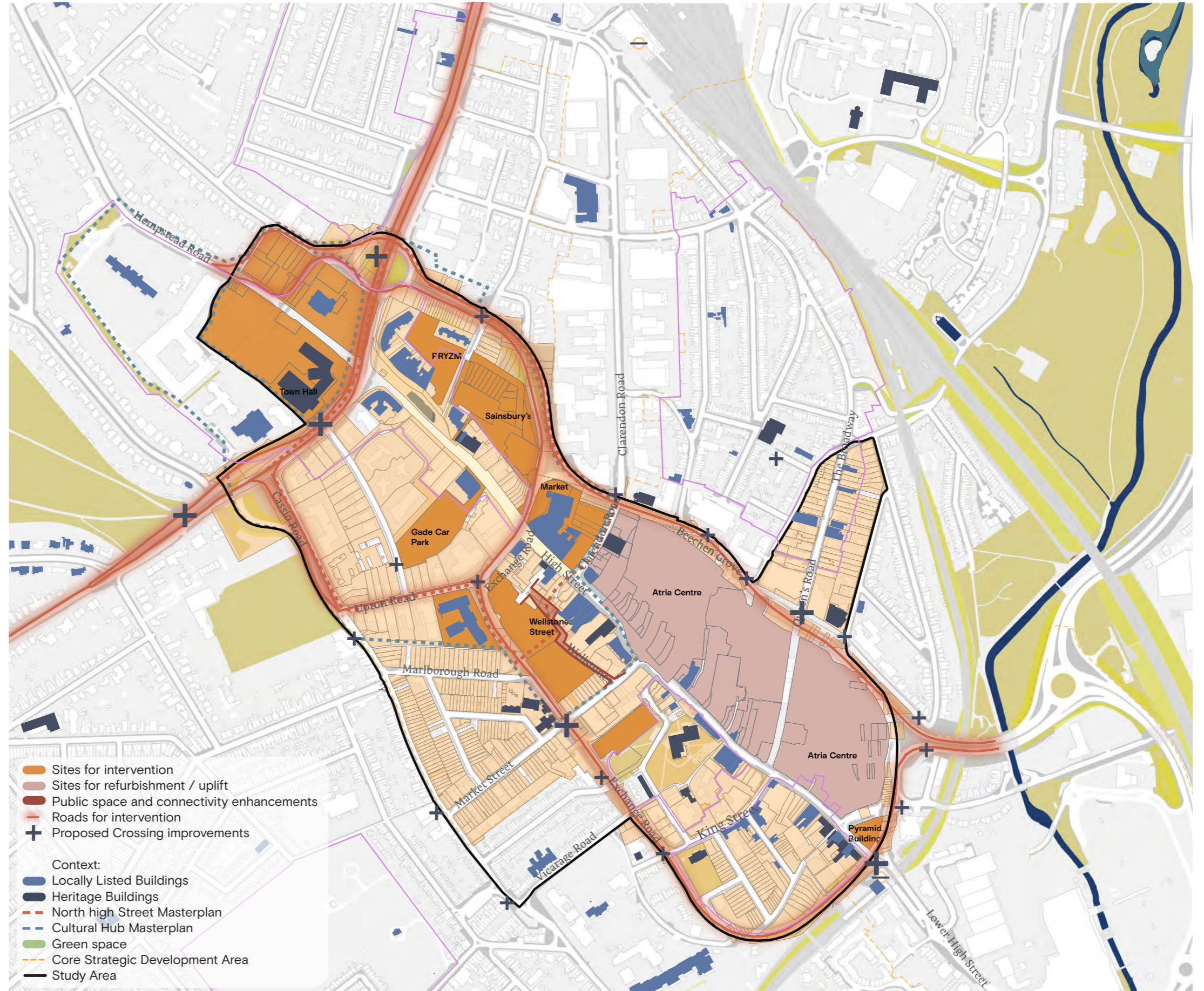
- Market / Clarendon Road / High Street (complete block with some retained frontage on High Street)
- Council-owned car parks
- Town Hall campus (currently under consideration by WBC)
- Plots around Exchange Road (Exchange building, Exchange House)
- PRYZM
- Sainsburys
- Pyramid

## Potential sites for refurbishment / uplift:

- Locally listed buildings, and those in disrepair
- Atria Centre

## Potential for public space and connectivity enhancements:

- Main road crossings (various)
- Recharacterisation of main roads
- Recharacterisation of back streets such as Wellstones
- Active travel enhancements (beyond current WBC investigations)
- Enhanced connections to nearby green spaces
- Church Street (town centre access from the west and enhanced green space)
- Car park strategy (all car parks considered collectively)
- Watford High Street station / Exchange Road crossing
- Potential land release from highways and roundabouts to include reallocation for other forms of transport or consider as developable land.



Capacity for change

# The opportunity

## KEY MESSAGES

The key messages that define the Framework and set its trajectory, responding to the analysis, but also the emerging town centre vision:

### WATFORD TOWN CENTRE WILL BE...

- At the centre of Watford's ambition to be the economic and cultural heart of the sub-region
- A place where there is something for everyone, truly accessible and inclusive to all, celebrating a diversity of uses and activities
- A leader in sustainable and high quality development that is green, clean and safe
- A place to live, work and invest in
- A desirable destination for visitors
- Have first-class active travel and low-carbon infrastructure

## GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Elaborating on the key messages, a series of guiding principles set out what the strategies within the framework will need to respond to:

### Future proofing the town centre

Future proofing the town centre: encouraging a balanced national and independent retail offer, and a mix of retail, commercial and leisure uses

### Boosting enterprise and innovation

Ensuring appropriate and affordable space is available for start-ups, small independents and creative businesses

### An interconnected town centre neighbourhood

Integrating the different character areas of the town centre with a range of uses and more opportunities for active travel

### Enabling multi-generational living

Harnessing the opportunities that a growing and ageing population provides and retaining a mixed community.

### Enhancing the user experience

Investing in an attractive, green, safe and welcoming public realm to encourage people to dwell and socialise in the town centre

### A town centre for all

Addressing the drivers of deprivation and increasing inclusion, wellbeing and social cohesion

# STRATEGIC APPROACH: CHARACTER & TOWNSCAPE

# STRATEGIC APPROACH: CHARACTER & TOWNSCAPE

## Character areas

The map here propositions the subdivision of the town centre into 7 parts, including acknowledgement of Clarendon Road to the north of the town centre.

### The role of the character areas

These character areas will help to direct area-specific enhancements, outlining a different offer for each, and responding to their unique characteristics to optimise their potential. Formalising their extents offers an opportunity to prescribe specific aspirations for each.

### Introducing the character areas

The High Street is the dominant feature of the town centre, and is split into 3 parts defined by changes in character. These characters are already recognisable set out by mature trees and planting at the nodes between them. The ring road defines much of the edge of these, and the future character of the ring road is an important factor in the future condition for these areas.

Queens Road forms a separate, but interrelated, appendage to High Street South, bringing more independent, local retail in comparison to the High Street's mainstream retail focus.

Market Street brings its own character into the town centre, bridging Exchange Road and forming a primary link to the south-west. In a similar way to Queens Road, this brings more independent retail, though is busier and has a more prominent relationship with the High Street.

The Town Hall Quarter sits north of Rickmansworth Road, stretching just beyond the town centre boundary. This reflects the collection of civic buildings and functions that make up the quarter, and responds to emerging plans for the regeneration of the area to bring more creative spaces and employment such as for start-ups.

Clarendon Road is an office district, playing an important role as a direct link between Watford Junction station and the town centre, and acting as an important location for jobs.

\*These character areas are expanded upon further in the character & Townscape: Character areas chapter.



Character Areas

# Opportunities to direct positive change

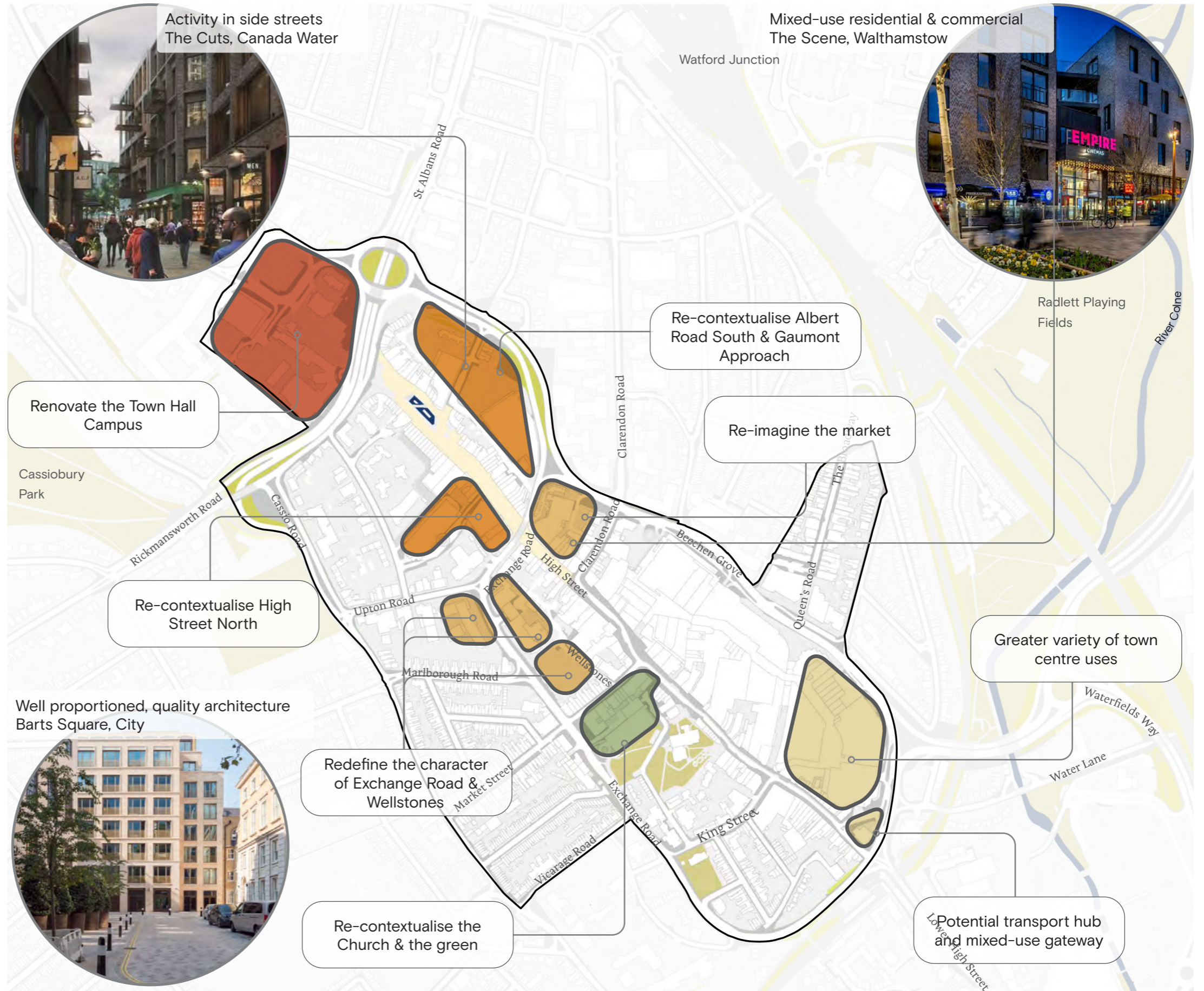
These plots represent an opportunity to positively sculpt the characters of Watford. Some are under consideration already, whilst others may be more complex though equally impactful.

## High quality architecture

The Framework is outlining how high quality architecture and buildings can come forward, optimising the potential of opportunity sites and of improved street characters, and responding positively to heritage and other assets.

## Supporting diversity

A key premise of the built character for Watford is to support diversity and inclusivity through design. This means allowing for a range of building typologies and supporting a diverse mix, supporting Watford as an age-friendly town and attracting people of all ages thanks to a mix of resources and high standards of liveability.



Opportunities to direct positive change

- Renovate the Town Hall Campus
- Re-contextualise High Street North
- Redefine High Street
- Redefine the character of Exchange Road & Wellstones
- Re-contextualise the Church & the green
- Dedicated highways land
- Study Area

# Sustainable Watford: opportunities for energy generation and efficiency

Buildings generate a significant proportion of carbon emissions both in construction and in use. There is opportunity across existing and proposed buildings to respond to broader sustainability strategies for the area. As such this covers both retrofitting as well as the directing of new building development. The responses include recommendations for Watford-specific strategies, and suggestions of how these may manifest.

## Recommended strategies to implement sustainable buildings cover four categories:

- Reduce Carbon
- Self-Sustaining buildings
- Reduce Reliance on Energy
- Retrofit Existing Buildings

### SELF-SUSTAINING BUILDINGS

#### Energy generation as part of all buildings

- Potential for PV arrays on roofs and surfaces
- Potential for heat pumps
- Potential to minimise energy requirements and to provide energy on site to help decentralise from the National Grid
- Potential to coordinate waste heat recovery from buildings / uses / sewer network

#### Natural ventilation and climate control

- Maximise dual aspect buildings and dwellings to allow for natural through-ventilation
- Orientate buildings to respond to micro-climate to take account of over-shadowing, solar shading, and passive cooling from building form

### RETROFIT EXISTING BUILDINGS

#### Make use of existing buildings & structure

- Potential to use existing roofscapes and structures to accommodate PV arrays, heat pumps and amenity gardens, even if only temporarily or semi-permanently



Modular facade components being positioned on site



Modular facade components



CLT components being assembled on site

### REDUCE CARBON

#### Reduce carbon in construction

- Utilise modular construction to optimise efficiencies
- Optimise efficient compact urban form, bringing a balance of density that allows for proximity to resources, without relying on height and subsequently additional structural material
- Utilise CLT construction where possible, in support of compact urban form of around 5-8 storeys

#### Circular approach

- Coordinate building and material waste

### REDUCE RELIANCE ON ENERGY

#### Optimise buildings in use

- Potential for all buildings to achieve Passivhaus standards to produce ultra-low running cost dwellings and produce healthier internal environments
- Opportunity to target BREEAM Excellent for non-residential elements. For shell-and-core outputs a risk rating system could be employed to ensure no loss in rating occurs later in the design process.
- Façade-first approach: high levels of insulation and glazing areas that achieve an optimal balance between heat loss, heat gain and natural daylighting.
- Energy efficient plant and systems, including Mechanical Ventilation with Heat Recovery (MVHR) for areas where noise may be an issue.



Modular construction  
Cartwright Gardens, student accommodation  
Maccreeanor Lavington



First Quality Approved Passivhaus town houses in Zone 1.  
South Gardens, Elephant Park, Southwark  
Maccreeanor Lavington

# STRATEGIC APPROACH: TOWN CENTRE USES



# STRATEGIC APPROACH: TOWN CENTRE USES

## Overview

This Town Centre Land Use Strategy links closely with the Town Centre Character and Townscape Strategy as the Character Areas set out in the latter define and frame locations for future uses across the Town Centre.

At a high level, this strategy focuses on maintaining High Street North, High Street Centre and High Street South as the retail and leisure heart of the town, but supporting them to adapt to rapidly changing consumer and macro-economic trends. This will be achieved by better catering to and encouraging the presence of independent businesses (e.g. via smaller units, incubator units and meanwhile uses) and supporting a more varied leisure, culture and food and beverage (F&B) offer throughout. Atria has a key role to play in this as it offers opportunities to meet demand for 'new leisure' activities (e.g. Virtual Reality, Gaming, Urban Mini Golf and Escape Rooms).

Employment and business space will continue to be focused along Clarendon Road which will cater for established and growing businesses, primarily in future growth sectors such as Professional, Scientific & Technical Activities and Information & Communication Services. It is important that Clarendon Road is maintained as area of important economic activity, even as new investment and development is delivered. The commercial space offer will adapt to meet changing occupier expectations in a post-COVID world (e.g. related to flexibility, quality and amenities) and it will become a more attractive and cohesive business cluster.

The introduction of business space into the core Town Centre (e.g. High Street North and High Street Centre) will also be encouraged to help diversify the offer, break down siloed land use patterns and increase vibrancy in the core. This space will focus on smaller and start-up businesses to help boost innovation and entrepreneurialism locally. As these businesses grow, scale and diversify suitable growth on space will be available on a strengthened and diversified Clarendon Road.

New residential development will also be encouraged across the centre to provide much-needed accommodation and to create a new hyper-local catchment to increase spending power. Much of

this will be on the edge of the centre, but there are large-scale opportunity sites in the Town Hall Quarter, High Street North and around Market Street. A diverse range of housing will be provided to cater for the growing number of people aged 65+; the high concentration of young, educated renters; the strong private rental market; working age families that underpin the local labour market and economy; and, deprived people currently living in and around the centre. This will ensure a diverse mix of residential types and products are available for different groups.

Key moves underpinning this strategy are:

- Focus retail, leisure, F&B and cultural uses in the core Town Centre (i.e. High Street North, High Street Centre and High Street South);

- Diversify the Town Centre offer by catering to independents and growing the leisure, culture and F&B offer;
- Consider re-purposing, re-developing or re-configuring Atria to better meet changing patterns of demand (e.g. related to 'New Leisure' and other town centre uses);
- Target F&B investment in High Street North, Watford Market and around Market Street given their potential for al fresco activity and existing strengths;
- Maintain Clarendon Road as a prominent business district by protecting commercial floorspace and adapting it to meet changing occupier expectations;

- Provide new ground floor and residential uses on Clarendon Road to increase its vibrancy and attractiveness to future occupiers;
- Introduce workspace into the core Town Centre (i.e. High Street North and High Street Centre) catering to small and new business;
- Encourage new residential uses in the core and periphery of the Town Centre to build a new hyper-local catchment and ensure that the residential mix is sufficiently varied to support a sustainable housing market and community, with new developments that will both complement and boost other town centre uses; and,
- Tackle barriers to housing and community services by increasing provision in accessible areas of the Town Centre.



Core town centre activity  
High Street North

## Retail & Leisure

Watford has a successful and well-used Town Centre. It is, however, highly vulnerable as it is dominated by comparison chain retailers. There is therefore a need to diversify the offer to reduce the town's reliance on these businesses and to capitalise on changing consumer trends (e.g. increasing expenditure on personal services/experiences, rising demand for leisure activities, increasing consumer conscientiousness and higher demand for independents).

Moving forward it will be important to attract and support independents to the core of the Town Centre (i.e. High Street North, High Street Centre and High Street South) to take advantage of growing consumer demand, and to enhance and diversify the leisure, culture and F&B offer. This should improve resilience and attract a broader and more varied demographic to visit the town centre.

The proposed strategy for retail and leisure is to:

- Provide smaller and more flexible units that appeal to independents and more resilient local chains and/or where possible break up/subdivide existing units to meet this market opportunity;
- Introduce low-cost retail incubator units that allow independent entrepreneurs to test and scale new high street concepts (e.g. within Council assets or new developments), either as formal developments or within meanwhile/temporary space;
- Activate meanwhile opportunities (including sites awaiting redevelopment) that allow independent businesses to test market demand for different products and services;
- Support innovative business models that are more sustainable for local independents (e.g. co-location of different businesses in one unit);
- Cluster F&B opportunities around High Street North, Watford Market and Market Street to take advantage of opportunities for al fresco activity and to build on existing strengths;
- Encourage independent F&B to complement the strong chain offer (e.g. with the existing offer including Nando's, Bills, Tortilla, Pizza Express, The Florist etc);
- Support re-purposing and/or re-configuration of Atria to become a major 'new leisure' destination for the sub-region;
- Consider re-purposing, re-developing or reconfiguring Atria, an important town centre anchor, to better meet changing patterns of demand (e.g. related to 'New Leisure' and other town centre uses) and to support the vitality of the centre;
- Explore opportunities to create a food incubator with local colleges to help develop the restaurateurs of tomorrow, and 'seed and feed' meanwhile and start-up space;
- Nurture existing cultural facilities and provide space for them to expand in the Town Centre; and,
- Introduce new cultural facilities throughout the core Town Centre to vary the mix and encourage linked trips (current gaps include art galleries, independent cinemas, artisan theatre houses, comedy clubs, intimate music venues).

There are also opportunities to introduce non-physical interventions to support the Town Centre evolve. Examples that could be explored include:

- **Place branding and marketing** – Following the introduction of new types of town centre businesses and uses, use the Visit Watford platform to develop and launch a place branding and marketing campaign to attract different types of people to visit the revitalised Town Centre;
- **Retail innovation grants/loans** – Provide small capital grants and loans to support independent retailers looking to evolve their business model to better meet consumer needs (e.g. by physically adapting their units and purchasing any necessary equipment/technology);

- **Retail entrepreneur grants/loans** – Provide small capital grants and loans to support retail entrepreneurs with innovative ideas that will enhance the Town Centre offer to activate and upgrade retail units to meet their requirements;
- **Retail business support programme** – Procure a retail expert to provide intensive 1-1 support for independent high street businesses to help them adapt their offering and increase revenue, particularly those that are important to the Town Centre's diversity; and,
- **Public sector asset strategy** – Use public sector assets to test new concepts and ideas to support the Town Centre's evolution (e.g. enhance the F&B offer in Watford Market).



Small, flexible independent business spaces within a historic character setting Pavilion Road, Chelsea

## Economy & Business Space

Watford Town Centre, incorporating Clarendon Road, plays an important role in the borough's economy and has strong and unique sector specialisms in Professional, Scientific & Technical Activities and Information & Communication Services.

Employment has, however, fallen over the last five years which is thought to reflect the high levels of office re-development on Clarendon Road and the loss of office space above retail units in the core. While economic performance is expected to recover once re-development has finished, these trends demonstrate the vulnerability of the local economy and its dependence on the provision of high-quality employment space.

The borough's economy is also not as entrepreneurial as it could be which may link to the fact there are few facilities that provide low-cost space and wraparound business support for entrepreneurs. Office rental rates are also increasing and becoming more unaffordable for new businesses and entrepreneurs.

Moving forward it will therefore be important to (a) protect existing business space and (b) diversify the commercial offer to suit businesses of different sizes and types. The future offer will need to cater for businesses in the borough's growth sectors, which are projected to be in higher-value office-based industries (particularly Professional Services), public services (particularly Health) and the Creative, Cultural and Digital industries.

It is also important to recognise that the nature of demand for business space is shifting towards flexible space that enables collaboration, supports wellbeing and fosters learning between employees that are increasingly adopting hybrid working patterns. A 'race for quality' has also begun with most occupiers looking for higher quality space that better caters for the needs of hybrid workers that will be in the office less regularly.

The proposed strategy for business space is to:

- Maintain Clarendon Road as a prominent business district by protecting commercial floorspace for established businesses and ensuring re-provision within development projects addressing old/outdated or not fit-for-purpose space;
- Ensure Clarendon Road has a diverse mix of business space to attract a range of future occupiers (e.g. serviced office, flexible workspace, co-working space etc), including potential for re-use/reconfiguration of existing space;
- Encourage a more diverse amenity offer on Clarendon Road to make it more varied and attractive to occupiers and employees, without undermining the core of the Town Centre (e.g. cafés, restaurants, homes etc);
- Enhance the branding, public realm, appearance and infrastructure on Clarendon Road to create a more attractive and cohesive business cluster;
- Encourage and support asset owners on Clarendon Road to upgrade and enhance their facilities so they remain attractive to occupiers;
- Introduce flexible workspace and co-working space that caters to micro and small businesses in the core Town Centre (i.e High Street North and High Street Centre) to diversify the offer, generate daytime footfall and increase vibrancy;
- Identify opportunities to provide dedicated incubator/accelerator space with wraparound business support in the core Town Centre to support entrepreneurs to start and scale businesses (including within the Town Hall Quarter); and,
- Work with cultural anchors to identify demand and need for studio, rehearsal and/or maker space to support their operations.

An important component of the land use strategy is to support the delivery of more business space in the town centre to vary the offer, support growth and help build resilience. To break down the current separation and zoning between Clarendon Road and the Town Centre the provision of flexible workspace, co-working space and/or incubator/accelerator space on the south side of the A411 will be important to encourage occupiers into the Town Centre. A major development incorporating business space in this location can act as a gateway into a new diversified Town Centre and act as the 'glue' connecting Watford Junction and Clarendon Road with the core Town Centre.

There are also opportunities to introduce non-physical interventions to support the Town Centre's economy. Many of these are addressed in the Watford Economic Growth Strategy (2021-2025), but other interventions that could be explored include:

- **Inward investment campaign:** Use the Visit Watford brand to launch a concerted inward investment campaign to encourage businesses to take up new space coming forward on Clarendon Road;
- **Clarendon Road BID:** Explore opportunities and appetite for partnerships between business and property owners focused on Clarendon Road;
- **Business accelerator programme:** Create or commission an accelerator programme to support promising businesses in new workspaces to rapidly scale-up, grow and create new employment opportunities for local people;
- **Business bootstrap programme:** Create or commission a programme to help entrepreneurs to set up new businesses and identify local workspace to support their needs; and,
- **Business support programme:** Create or commission a programme to help existing small and medium sized enterprises grow and become more efficient, particularly in sectors that the Town Centre needs retain (e.g. Professional, Scientific and Technical Activities).

# Residential Space

There is high demand for and limited supply of residential accommodation across Watford and its Town Centre. This is reflected in the new Watford Local Plan (2020–2036) which identifies a need to provide almost 15,000 new homes over the plan period. The Town Centre, captured within the borough’s ‘Core Development Area’ within the Local Plan, is identified as a priority area for higher density development:

“Within the Core Development Area higher density development of at least 95 dwellings per hectare is expected. Higher-density development will be particularly supported in areas where there is good access to Mass Rapid Transport, such as at Watford Junction” (Policy HO3.2, Pg 43).

This is significant because the Town Centre currently has comparatively little residential accommodation as the borough’s current ‘zoning’ of uses means most housing is located outside of the ring road.

Moving forward it will be important to provide homes in the Town Centre that cater for the current and future population. This will help to create new vibrant and hyper-local catchment to support the Town Centre during daytimes and evenings. Key groups identified through research include:

- **The growing number of people aged 65+:** The Office for National Statistics (ONS) project that future population growth is going to be highest among people aged 65+;
- **The high concentration of young, educated renters:** Experian Mosaic data shows that the local and wider catchment has a strong representation of people classified as ‘Rental Hubs’ (educated young renters);
- **The strong private rental market:** Around a third of homes in the Town Centre are rented which is well above national and county-level averages;
- **Working age families that underpin the local labour market and economy:** Watford’s local catchment is currently dominated by working age people; and,
- **Deprived people currently living in and around the centre:** There are pockets of deprivation to the south and east of the centre.

Given the diversity of these groups, a wide range of dwelling types (i.e. flats and houses), typologies (i.e. build to rent, private sale, extra care, residential care, co-living etc) and tenures (i.e. social rent, market rent, affordable sale, market sale etc) will be need to be provided across the Town Centre to meet demand. This is reflected in the new Local Plan which has specific policies for Affordable Housing (Policy HO3.3), Built to Rent Homes (Policy HO3.4), Specialist Housing and Care Homes (Policy HO3.5) and Student, Co-Living and Non-Self-Contained Accommodation (Policy HO3.6).

The principles guiding that should guide residential development proposals in the Town Centre are:

- The domestic scale of the High Street is part of Watford’s character. Consideration should be given to creating places with different scales and levels of intricacy, to reflect the urban grain of buildings, streets and open spaces.
- New development should create frontages that engage with the ring road, to improve both character and connectivity.
- The nature and scale of heritage assets, and their social history, should inform the development of character areas, and new developments within them.
- The relationship of new buildings to surrounding open spaces should be considered in new developments, so that the public realm can support different uses, assist with legibility and contribute to defining character areas.

From a location perspective, the strategy for residential uses is:

- To create a new diverse neighbourhood around Market Street and to the west of High Street Central that caters to different types/ages of people. The downgrading of Exchange Road and Upton Road, alongside development sites such as Church Car Park, Exchange House, BT Building, Gade House and Gade Car Park, provide a major opportunity to do this;
- To use opportunity sites to around High Street North to also provide a wide range of housing types and tenures given their strategic Town Centre location and proximity to amenities;
- To provide housing catering to young professionals on Clarendon Road and around the ring road given their proximity to major employers, as well as Watford Junction and the connectivity this provides to Central London and other major cities; and,
- To introduce some housing suitable to older people to developments within the Town Hall Quarter given the local services on offer (i.e. Town Hall, Leisure Centre, Library etc), quieter environment and the proximity of the area to the core Town Centre offer.

Housing affordability is a major concern in Watford and its Town Centre as both rent and sale values are above the national average. New accommodation will need to help address this challenge and actively provide affordable options to help tackle drivers of deprivation. In line with the new Local Plan policy:

“Residential developments, including residential institutions of ten homes or more will be supported where they provide at least 35% affordable housing (by habitable room). Proposals will be required to provide a mix of affordable housing tenures, including a minimum of 60% of new affordable homes as homes for social rent. The homes for social rent should seek to prioritise family-sized (three+ bedrooms) accommodation and reflect the most up-to-date housing strategy” (Policy HO3.3, Pg 44).

## Other Uses

There are pockets of deprivation in and around the Town Centre. Evidence illustrates that this is primarily driven by barriers to housing and local community services. Development proposals that can help address these issues will be supported. Local people suggest that, beyond affordable housing, gaps in the local offer include spaces for young people, child friendly spaces and education/health facilities.

### BEST PRACTICE Plus X, Brighton

A high quality new build innovation hub in Brighton that offers physical and digital maker facilities (including a hardware workshop, podcast studio and photography suite) and a range of supporting business growth and innovation services.



### Kingland, Poole

Ten vacant retail units that have been let at no charge by Legal & General to a carefully curated group of independent retailers to help transform Poole Town Centre and drive local footfall and spend.



### Central Parade, Walthamstow

A unique retail incubator that offers two high street units and several concession spaces that are available to public-facing start-ups to test and trail new ideas in the heart of the Walthamstow Town Centre.



### International House, Brixton

A 50,000 sq ft affordable workspace in a former London Borough of Lambeth office, which provides market rate office and co-working space for established businesses which, in turn, cross-subsidises free space for community organisations and social enterprises.



### Gravity, Wandsworth

Former Debenhams store that has been transformed into a three floor, 100,000 sq ft 'new leisure' destination featuring e-karting, bowling, urban golf, e-sports, digital darts and more.



### The Collective, Old Oak

High quality co-living accommodation in Old Oak that also offers a gym, co-working, bar, cinema, events and cultural programme.



### Modular Housing, Anerley

Modular low-cost housing that was built within six months on a Council-owned site for homeless families on the London Borough of Bromley's housing waiting list.



### Snoozebox, Olympic Park

Innovative adults only accommodation in a modular shipping container design that provides 78 en suite rooms for guests, who also have access to a social lounge with 24 hour food and beverage facilities, free WiFi, TV's and rest rooms.



### Skip Garden, Kings Cross

A movable vegetable garden that was funded and managed by Argent as a meanwhile project on vacant sites as the Kings Cross regeneration scheme came forward.



### Anerley Business Centre

A neighbourhood workspace in the London Borough of Bromley's former Anerley Town Hall that provides managed workspace for small businesses and local charities, where all profit is used by the Crystal Palace Community Trust to run community activities and services targeted at older and younger people.



# STRATEGIC APPROACH: PUBLIC REALM

# STRATEGIC APPROACH: PUBLIC REALM

## Characters & Nodes

The primary foci of the town centre are highlighted, each of which respond directly to the character areas, and each of which can perform a unique function for the town centre.

### The role of public realm characters & nodes

By defining each primary public realm character, and their associated nodes at points of transition, a series of bespoke responses can be directed. Each has their own unique requirements, and have their own setting, requiring different approaches to optimise their potential.

### Introducing the characters

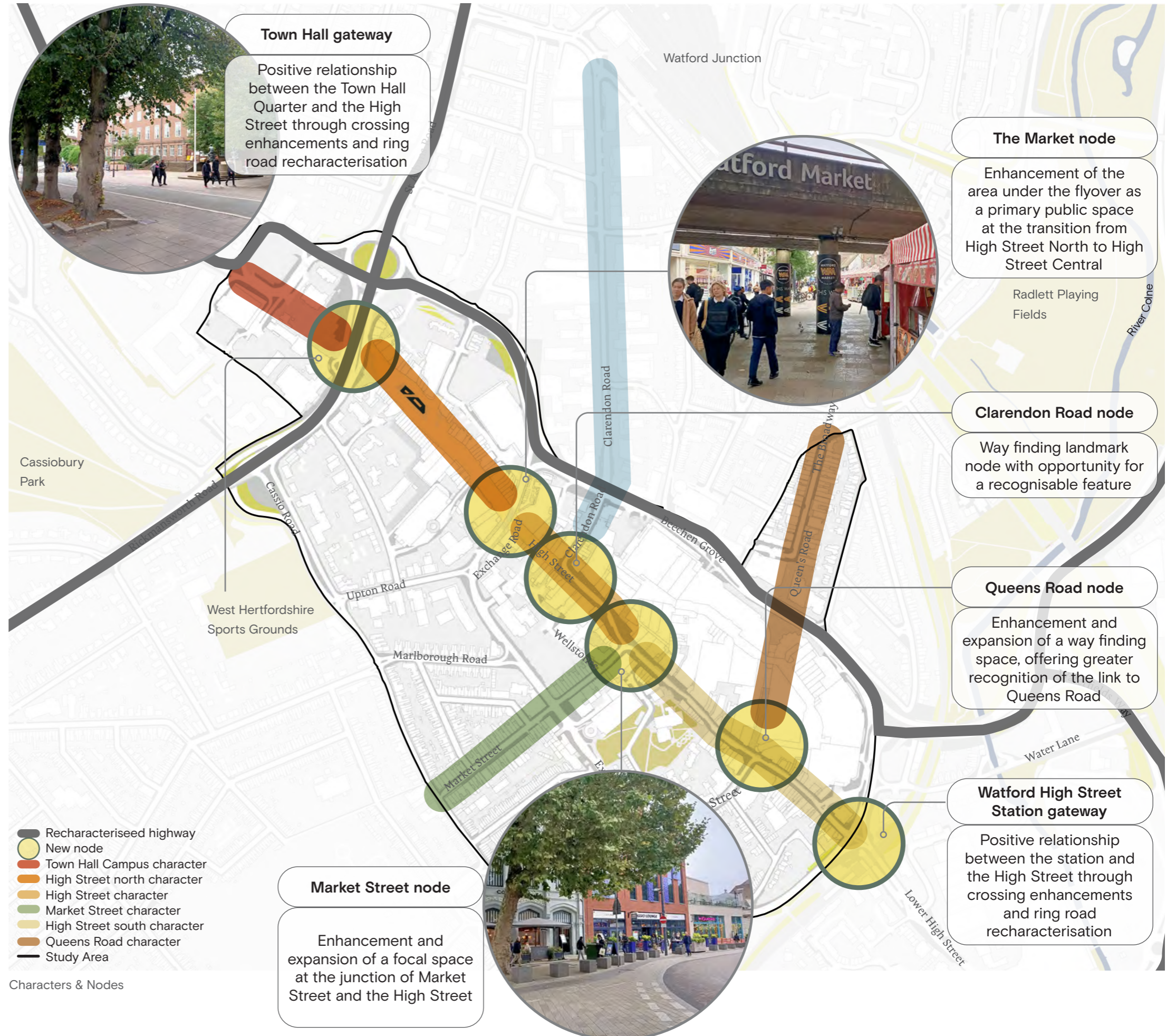
The High Street is presented as a series of characters, with the key arteries at its edges feeding the town centre - the THQ, Queens Road, Market Street, and Clarendon Road. These can each be characterised by key uses that can differ between them, supporting the town centre in different ways.

- Town Hall Quarter: civic and cultural focus
- High Street North: events space
- High Street Central: relationship to the market
- High Street South: intimate high street
- Market Street: new focus on public space beyond vehicular movement
- Queens Road: re-characterised as a core component of the town centre, not a peripheral space
- Clarendon Road: linear space connecting the town centre to the station

### Introducing the nodes

A series of nodes connect the string of characters along the High Street and key connecting routes. At every juncture, a special point of interest can be created. Many of these are already punctuated by a mature tree, and the theme of greening can be the primary method to create landmarks with way finding elements, further enhancing these nodes as positive spaces.

Photos of how these spaces currently manifest are included on the map, with notes on how they could be enhanced.



Characters & Nodes



# Spatial Framework

## Gateways

Opportunity to create a special arrival point onto the High Street from the Town Hall and from Watford High Street station.

## Green link flyover

Potential to re-purpose the flyover as an interim green space, and later as a cycling and walking connection, potentially forming part of a re-imagined market taking advantage of a green outdoor elevated terrace.

## Back streets and links

Redefine these with new buildings, and create shared streets with greater space for pedestrians. These can take advantage of lane ways, through the lane ways strategy, as secondary connections to the High Street.

## SuDS and street greening

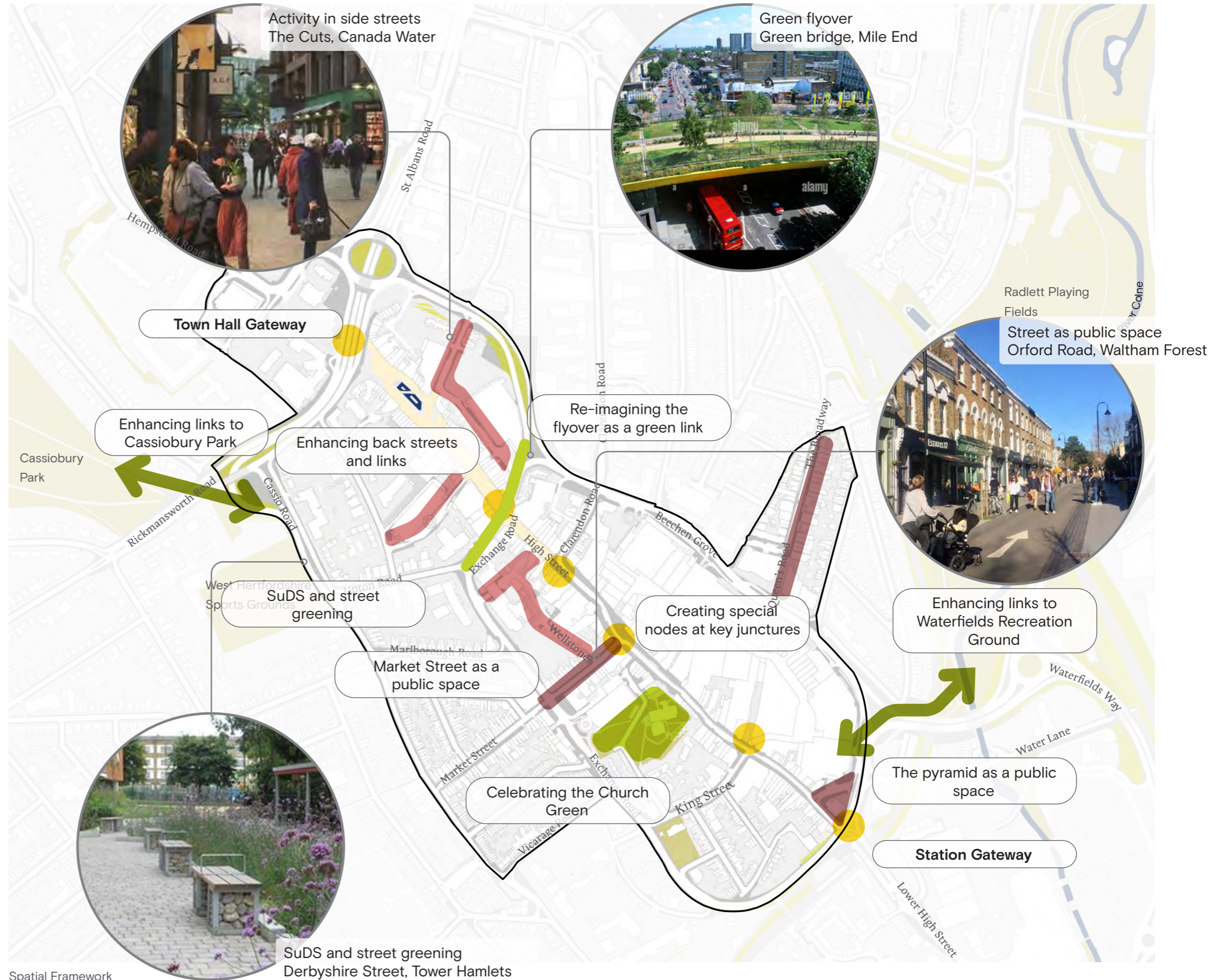
Potential for all streets to accommodate SuDS as part of a wider network strategy, and to introduce greening throughout.

## Market Street

Re-imagine Market Street as a public space rather than a vehicular highway.

## Church Green

Re-characterise the space to create an attractive dwelling space.



# Sustainable Watford: Opportunities for biodiversity & greening

Protecting and enhancing green space is important as it provides a habitat for wildlife, provides access to green space for residents and helps mitigate the effect of climate change.

There are opportunities to enhance green corridors, create new green infrastructure, make use of the potential to improve street greening and encourage green space within private development as the town grows.

A key consideration is the mutual needs of humans and the rest of the natural world: at times these can cause conflict particularly in hunting for space, and a symbiotic relationship should be sought in resolving this.

**Recommended actions to implement this include:**

- Biodiversity Enhancement
- Rooftop Strategy
- SuDS Strategy
- Amenity & Biodiversity Strategy

## BIODIVERSITY ENHANCEMENT

### Optimise biodiversity enhancement in buildings

- Tall buildings can coordinate biodiversity enhancement through collective amenity and green spaces, considered in a wider context and potentially across a number of plots

### Optimise biodiversity enhancement in spaces

- Potential for hard and soft spaces to collectively deliver biodiversity enhancement independently of building plot provision



Coordinated rooftop space for greening and PVs London



SuDS as part of public space Queen Caroline Estate London

## ROOFTOP STRATEGY

### Coordinate rooftop space

- Potential for a strategy to coordinate green roof space, PV arrays, heat pumps, plant space, and amenity gardens

## AMENITY & BIODIVERSITY STRATEGY

### Coordinate human amenity with flora and fauna requirements symbiotically

- Consider the requirements for human amenity space (communal and shared recreational space) and biodiversity enhancement and space for nature, through a coordinated approach such as including wild planting and considering light levels within green space

### Support the Green Infrastructure network

- New development and interventions should support the network through consideration of their wider impact and of how they plug into the broader network



Rooftop amenity Pancras Square, Kings Cross



Mixture of dwelling space and informal public playspace alongside active uses Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park, London

## SUDS STRATEGY

### Coordinate a network of SuDS

- Potential to provide SuDS and tree planting within a network across streets and spaces throughout the town centre

# STRATEGIC APPROACH: MOVEMENT

# STRATEGIC APPROACH: MOVEMENT

## Active travel & shorter term interventions

The map here highlights where active travel enhancements can be made, often in the shorter term, to improve pedestrian and cycling access into and through the town centre.

### Crossings

Particularly in relation to the ring road, there are significant opportunities to improve active travel access into the town centre. In some cases these involve an upgrade to existing crossings, and in others there are opportunities for new surface crossings such as to the Watford Colosseum and Cassiobury Park. In the longer-term there is potential for more wholesale change through replacing grade-separated crossings with surface crossings.

### Active travel routes







In support of the work already underway, the Framework highlights how the upgrades to the active travel network can coordinate with upgraded crossings and street characteristics.

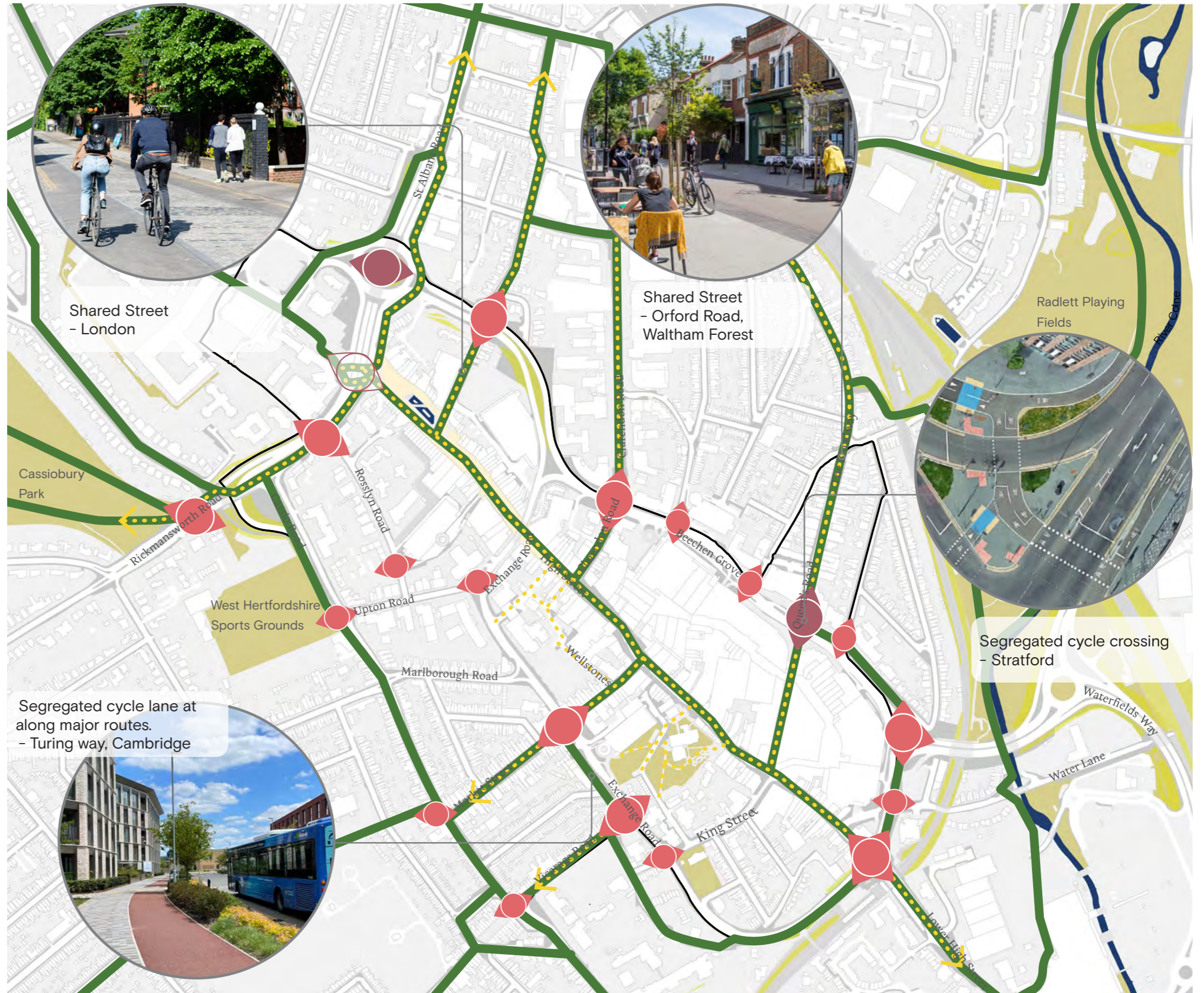
### Public realm nodes as arrival points

The aforementioned public realm nodes have the opportunity to become attractive arrival points for active travel into the town centre, helping also with way finding. Switching the focus of points like this towards active travel will also help support the modal shift away from local car journeys.

### Safety and resolving conflicts

A key premise of the enhancement to active travel infrastructure is to improve safety for pedestrians and cyclists, both from the perspective of road safety and also social safety, to help in striving for White Ribbon Accreditation. One component of this is resolving conflicts between modes, for instance on tight streets with vehicles. Another is in creating more attractive environments that have better passive surveillance and are better used generally.

-  Convert to surface crossing (longer-term)
-  Enhance crossing/new surface crossing
-  Potential connection enhancement
-  Cycle and walking network
-  Priority active travel routes
-  Study Area







Active travel & shorter term interventions

# Strategic enhancements over the longer term

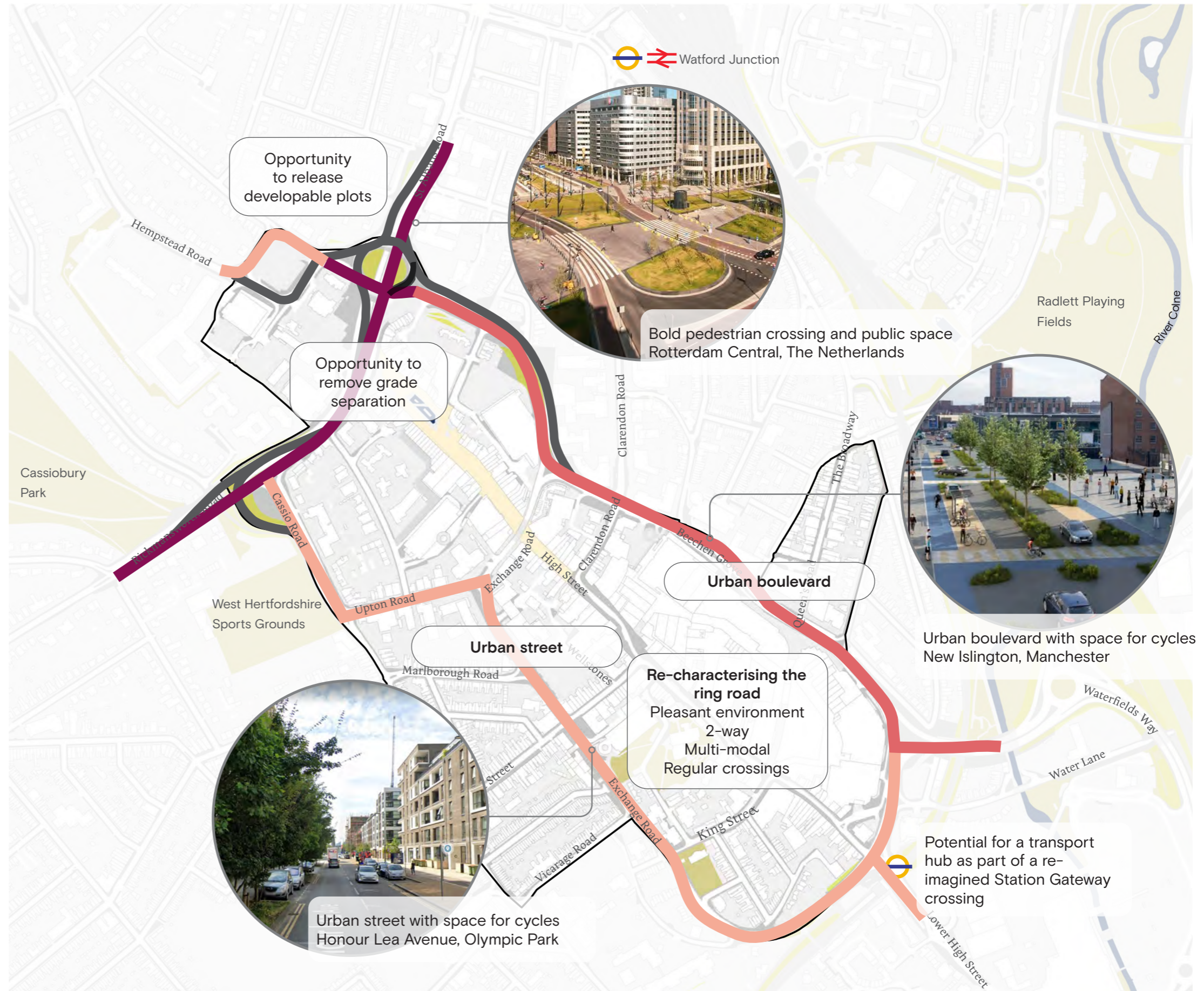
The map here represents the longer term ambitions of the Transforming Travel in Watford strategic enhancements that would re-characterise the highway network around the town centre. The premise is for an enhanced environment, with a two-way network, and a reinterpretation of street hierarchy (map below), taking opportunity to remove grade separation. This would create a more pleasant environment for pedestrians to walk along and cross, and for buildings to face and interact with.

An emphasis is placed on modal share, with opportunity to incorporate cycling infrastructure and respond to the Highway Code prioritisation for pedestrians and cyclists, particularly in this town centre environment. This can be supported through the recharacterisation of roads to focus on active travel rather than primarily vehicles, creating a more positive setting for buildings and public spaces as well.

Cycling infrastructure is being considered further within WBC, and this strategic approach is designed to accommodate and support the forthcoming short term cycling infrastructure upgrades.

-  Reallocate portion of highway & create developable plots
-  Urban boulevard: re-characterise highway as a primary route but with narrower carriageways, becoming 2-way, incorporating street trees and crossings
-  Urban street: re-characterise as a secondary route and incorporate street greening and regular crossings
-  Remove grade-separation and create an urban boulevard with regular crossings

The strategic proposed primary route network below highlights the potential to reconfigure the ring road with two-way connections. These must also be re-characterised and must accommodate other modes.



Strategic enhancements over the longer term

# Sustainable Watford: Low impact travel and movement infrastructure

Lifestyle carbon emissions are in a large part related to travel and air pollution is associated with a number of adverse health impacts. Road transport is the biggest source of nitrogen dioxide in the UK and utilises large amounts of land.

Through these approaches, the Framework promotes the commitment to a modal shift away from private car use towards active travel. This can be supported by a shift toward electric vehicles, better public transport access and promoting active forms of town centre travel including for delivery.

## Recommended strategies to implement this include:

- Supporting cycling culture
- Promoting electric vehicles
- Promoting modal shift
- Low impact deliveries

## PROMOTING ELECTRIC VEHICLES

### Electric vehicle charging

- Potential to promote EV charging for car sharing schemes and taxis, discouraging increased private car use

### Bi-directional charging

- Potential to harness EVs as a battery store for excess renewable energy

### Electric buses & heavy vehicles

- Potential for a hydrogen energy solution for buses and heavy vehicles, avoiding reliance on batteries and charging times



Cargo bike delivery  
London



Attractive bike infrastructure  
The Netherlands

## SUPPORTING A CYCLING CULTURE

### Cargo bike facilities

- Streetscape provision for formal drop-off and pick-up space for cargo bikes

### Private bike storage

- Bike storage should be attractive and easily accessible

### Public bike storage

- The streetscape should accommodate formal generous temporary bike storage

## PROMOTING MODAL SHIFT

### Car sharing

- Provide spaces for car sharing initiatives and discourage private car ownership

### Cycle infrastructure

- Accommodate safe cycling infrastructure across the town

### Attractive walking environment

- Public realm enhancements and street enhancements to focus on improving the environment for pedestrians

## LOW IMPACT TOWN CENTRE DELIVERIES

### Cargo bikes for last mile delivery

- Support shift from reliance on heavy vehicles for town centre delivery with supporting facilities

### Coordinated timing for heavy deliveries

- Increase the safety and attractiveness of streets in the town centre at busy times, by only allowing heavy vehicles into the town centre at specific times



Cycle parking infrastructure  
Edmonton Green, London

# CHARACTER & TOWNSCAPE: CHARACTER AREAS

# CHARACTER & TOWNSCAPE: CHARACTER AREAS

## Town Hall Quarter: civic and cultural focus

### EXISTING CONTEXT AND IDENTITY

The Town Hall Quarter is characterised by a cluster of institutional buildings on public sector owned land. The area, except the Avenue Car Park, is part of the Civic Core Conservation Area and consists of many heritage buildings such as the Town Hall, Watford Library and the Colosseum. The historical setting for many of these buildings is diminished by surrounding car parks and wide roads.

Access to this area from the rest of the town centre and the High Street is limited and challenging for active travellers across the Rickmansworth Road underpass.

### CHALLENGES

- The area is severed from the town centre by Rickmansworth Road.
- The overly wide highways occupy much needed developable land.
- Limited active travel crossings across highways.
- Large swathes of car parking reduces the quality of the public space and setting of the historic buildings.
- The buildings are also isolated from one another by vehicular infrastructure, reducing the cohesiveness of the campus.
- The nature of Rickmansworth Road creates a negative setting for buildings and their outlook.

### ASPIRATIONS FOR THE AREA

The area has the potential to contribute to a thriving new town centre, with a stronger civic identity, new homes, employment and public space, underpinned by a revitalised creative, cultural and heritage offer. The transformation of the area can also enhance existing heritage assets and improve their context.

In the longer term, there is opportunity to re-characterise the surrounding highways and roads, to reallocate for other forms of transport or consider as developable land, connecting the campus more successfully to the High Street across Rickmansworth Road, creating a more positive edge and outlook, and gaining further area for development and spaces such as around the roundabout. This will also

improve the public environment and help increase active travel mobility.

### POTENTIAL INTERVENTIONS

#### Character & Townscape

- Renovate heritage assets.
- Enhance the setting of the historic buildings public space upgrades.
- Potential to develop and intensify site area regained from highway land, coordinating with town hall campus masterplan redevelopments.
- Create a multi-use public space outside the Library providing opportunity for outside space to dwell.
- Potential to develop & intensify site area regained from highway land, coordinating with town hall campus masterplan redevelopments

#### Public Realm

- Reconfigure the Town Hall Quarter crossing between the High Street and the Town Hall Quarter to facilitate surface level active travel movement between the two areas.
- Potential for all streets to accommodate SuDS as part of a wider network strategy, and to introduce greening throughout.
- Create a crossing to Cassiobury Park across Rickmansworth Road

#### Movement

- Create active travel network across the campus
- Create new at-grade connections across surrounding highways
- Reconfigure highways to remove grade separation and reduce width in order to improve the setting of the campus, gain developable land, and encourage active travel.





# Case Studies

## BONN SQUARE, OXFORD BY GRAEME MASSIE ARCHITECTS



© Graeme Massie

### Public spaces for dwelling around the town hall.

The public space provides an open space for the students and staff, the city centre with limited public space. In retaining that which is essential and of historic value, and by folding a taut sandstone surface over its currently fragmented extent, the resultant space achieves a spatial clarity and a dialogue with the material fabric of Oxford, while multiple surface textures allows for a subtle patterning and articulation of both anticipated usage and historic land ownership boundaries.

## ALBERT SQUARE, MANCHESTER TOWN HALL BY PRACTICE ARCHITECTURE AND OFFICE FOR CRAFTED ARCHITECTURE



© Monika Lukasik

### Public spaces for cultural events and festivals.

Albert Square provides a public space that is an enhanced 'destination' and setting for the Town Hall, celebrating the heritage architecture of the building. It provides a high quality public space, that is inclusive and accessible. Access to the square is through walking, cycling and use of public transport, Green space to enhances the experience of the space and achieves carbon reduction objectives whilst framing focal points and key views.

## WALTHAM FOREST TOWN HALL MASTERPLAN MACCREANOR LAVINGTON ARCHITECTS + GORT SCOTT



© Gort Scott



### Town Hall recharacterisation

The masterplan aims to transform the existing Town Hall campus into a mixed use place orientated around biodiverse green space, culture, civic society and workspace, alongside a significant number of new homes. The area encompasses the Civic buildings, workspace and Assembly Hall, including the re-imagination and reconfiguration of the Grade II Listed existing Town Hall.

# High Street North: retail heart

## EXISTING CONTEXT AND IDENTITY

The northern part of Watford High Street is currently characterised by a retail core with some leisure and night time activity. The High Street runs through the centre of the area and contains a quality public route, with seating, trees and landscaping and a water feature (The Pond).

The buildings flanking the High Street are a mix of 2-3 storey historic and contemporary buildings, with a retail ground floor and residential or commercial above. The areas beyond the High Street consist of a mix of commercial and residential uses. Gade Car Park and the Sainsbury's are significant buildings that utilise large parcels of land with a single use.

The character area is bound by Rickmansworth Road to the north, Rosslyn Road to the west, Exchange Road to the south and Beechen Grove to the east.

## CHALLENGES

- The area is severed from the Town Hall Campus by Rickmansworth Road and from the northeast by Beechen Grove.
- The nature of Beechen Grove and Rickmansworth Road creates a negative setting for buildings and their outlook.
- Vehicular infrastructure dominates around Albert Road with large areas given to surface parking.

## ASPIRATIONS FOR THE AREA

The northern gateway has the potential to enhance the existing qualities of the character area through mixed use development, including residential, retail and commercial uses, but also to bolster its role as an evening and night-time focus of the town centre.

Streets behind the High Street such as Albert Road have opportunity to be positively re-characterised with active uses.

There is potential to connect more positively to Clarendon Road across Beechen Grove, and towards the Town Hall Quarter to the north.

## POTENTIAL INTERVENTIONS

### Character & Townscape

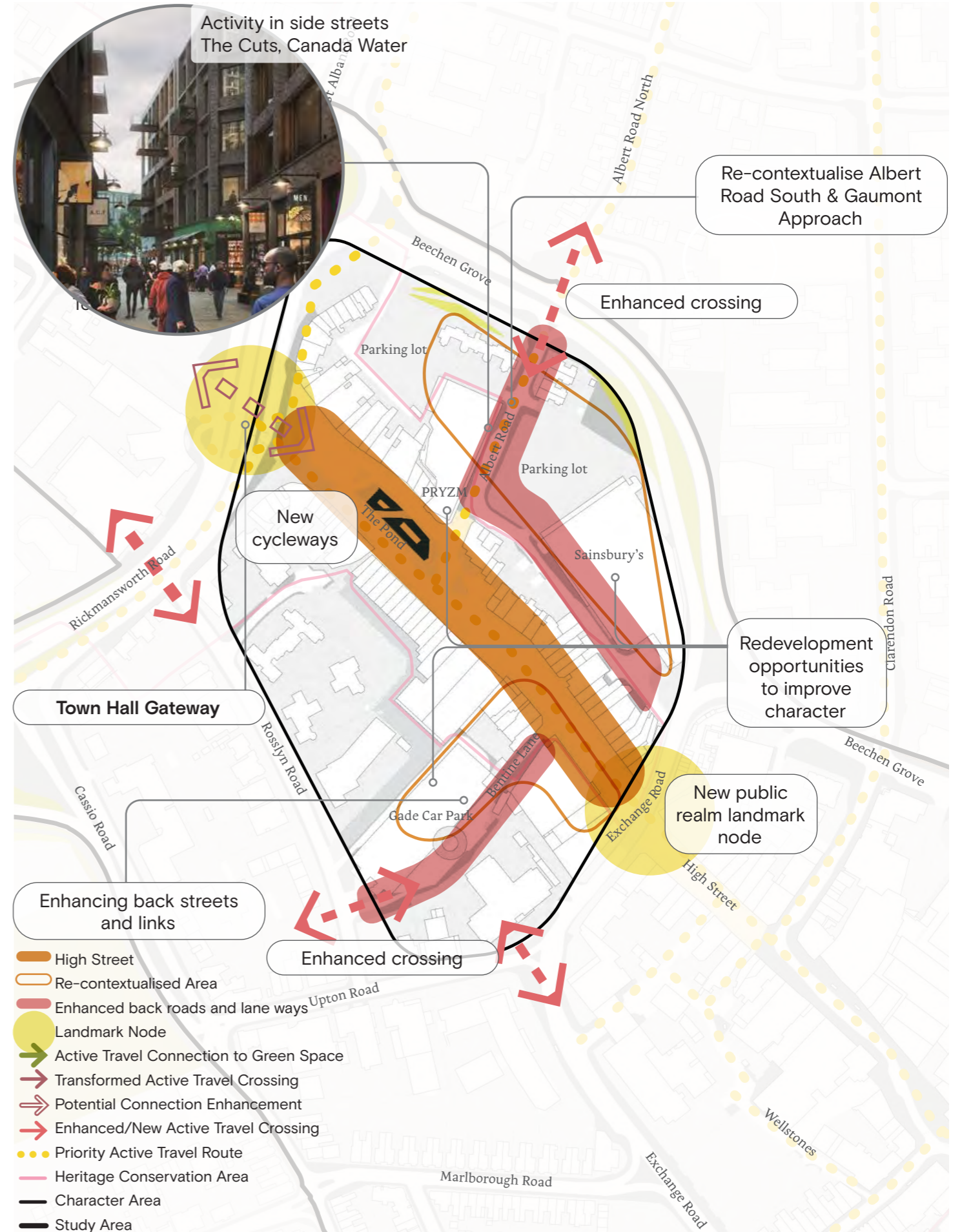
- Enhance the context and frontage along back streets/lane ways behind the High Street.
- Opportunity for mixed use redevelopment at Gade car park, Sainsbury's and PRYZM to enhance character, increase activity, and make more optimal use of land through stacking uses.

### Public Realm

- Reconfigure the Town Hall Gateway crossing between the High Street and the Town Hall Quarter to facilitate active travel movement between the two areas.
- Create a positive public realm landmark node on the High Street at the transition to the High Street Central character area.
- Potential for all streets to accommodate SuDS as part of a wider network strategy, and to introduce greening throughout.
- Re-characterise back streets and lane ways along Bentine Lane and Albert Road with new surfaces and treatments to promote active travel.

### Movement

- Enhanced Beechen Grove active travel crossing to Albert Road North.
- Create new cycleways across the area such as along the High Street, and integrate with the emerging wider active travel network
- Enhance pedestrian way finding across the area.



# Case Studies

## THE CUTS, CANADA WATER BY ALLIES AND MORRISON



© Allies and Morrison

### Activity in side streets

An intricate network of narrow lanes located between Canada Water and Greenland Dock that support walking and cycling access as an alternative to main roads.

The narrow scale of the street supports a pedestrian oriented active ground floor with residential above.

## GEORGE HOUSE, SLOANE STREET AND PAVILION STREET STIFF + TREVILLION



© Google maps

### Active ground floor within historic character.

The historic character of the urban block between Sloane Street, Symons Street and Pavilion Street is complemented by the recent addition of a new retail and office building on Sloane Street and a two-storey terrace of shops on Pavilion Road. The massing and material are chosen to help the new addition blend in with the context without directly referencing the architectural style.

## THE BEESTENMARKT DELFT, THE NETHERLANDS



### Cafe space spilling out into the square

Food and beverage spilling out into a public square, well defined by being bordered by a pedestrian walkway along its edges. The 2-3 storey historic buildings interface a well-proportioned square that is covered by trees, creating shade and pleasant space to inhabit.

Ground floor retail and cafés activate the square and attract people to the space.

# High Street Central: relationship to the market

## EXISTING CONTEXT AND IDENTITY

Watford High Street is a central spine running through the town centre and consists of a mix of retail and food & beverage options. The northern end of the high street is pedestrianised but the High Street is shared by vehicles south of Clarendon Road, reducing the quality of the public space.

The Watford Market is an important part of the town centre, running since the 12th century, and adapting over the years. It currently occupies a space adjacent to the Exchange Road flyover. The Atria shopping Centre occupies a large portion of the northern side of the High Street and provides a mix of retail options internally, and with individual shops interfacing the High Street. Quality paving with seating, trees, greening and cafés spill out into the street and occupy the pavement outside the shopping centre.

## CHALLENGES

- A portion of the High Street is shared with vehicles, reducing its quality.
- The Exchange Road flyover reduces the quality of the High Street underneath it.
- The public space on Wellstones is compromised by service entrances and car parks.
- Connections over Beechen Grove are heavily compromised.
- The nature of Beechen Grove and Exchange Road creates a negative setting for buildings and their outlook

## ASPIRATIONS FOR THE AREA

There is potential to reinvigorate and increase the prominence of the Watford Market by improving its visibility and prominence. Way finding from the town centre towards the market should be enhanced. There is opportunity to improve the character of Wellstones by enhancing the public environment. A significant way to improve the street is through the redevelopment of the Wellstones car park. The dominance of Exchange Road should be reduced by transforming the nature of the street to be more active travel oriented, alongside vehicle use.

## POTENTIAL INTERVENTIONS

### Character & Townscape

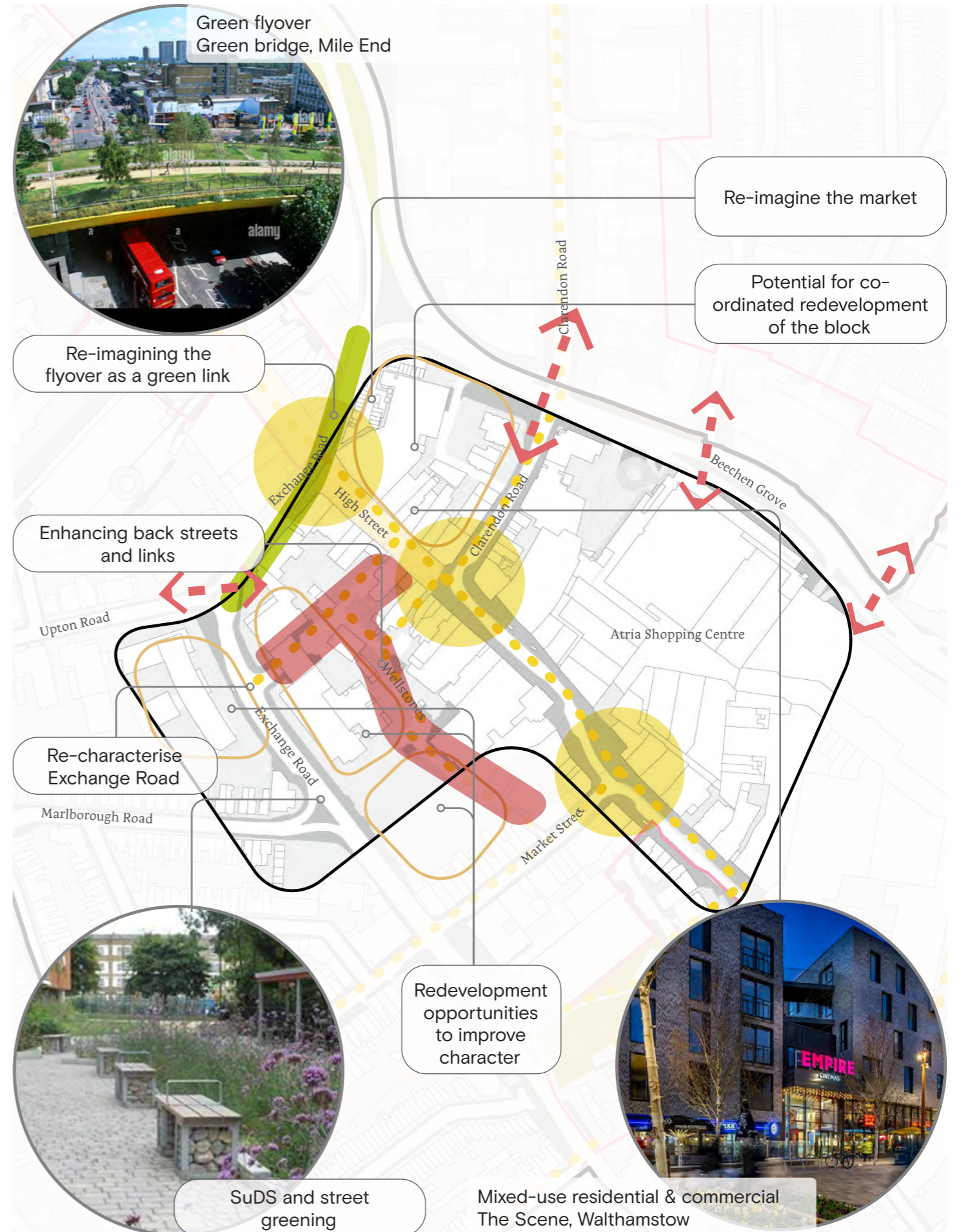
- The urban block around the market has the potential to be redeveloped and intensified, with the appropriate preservation of the historic buildings along the High Street. The Watford Market should be fit for purpose, high quality and meet the current and future market demands. It has the potential to be re-provided within this redevelopment and re-imagined with an improved setting, prominence and visibility within the town centre. Access into the block / the market from Beechen Grove should be more visible and less car dominated.
- Redefine the character of Wellstones with active uses.

### Public Realm

- Create a positive public realm landmark node on the High Street at the transition to the High Street North character area and with Market Street.
- Transform the flyover on Exchange Road across the High Street into a green bridge and active travel connection, potentially forming part of a re-imagined market.
- Re-characterise Wellstones with new surfaces and treatments to promote active travel.
- Potential for all streets to accommodate SuDS as part of a wider network strategy, and to introduce greening throughout.

### Movement

- Enhance active travel crossing between High Street and Clarendon Road to support the transition in character and use.
- Enhance pedestrian way finding across the area, especially in relation to showcasing the market.
- Create new cycleways across the area such as along the High Street, and integrate with the emerging wider active travel network



# Case Studies

## GREEN BRIDGE, MILE END BY CZWG



© CZWG

### Green flyover

The Green Bridge was invented by us to overcome the conflict between Mile End Park and the traffic of the Mile End Road. Our idea of joining the two halves of Mile End Park with a piece of landscape is the major gesture in the redevelopment as a whole, highlighting the presence of the park at a major access point and establishing it as a true linear park.

The neighbouring fragmented façades are reunited by the establishment of the new retail frontages, which help to contain and revitalise the intensity of a major road intersection previously lost in the under-used open spaces on either side.

## HEYGATE STREET, ELEPHANT & CASTLE, LONDON MACCREANOR LAVINGTON



© Maccreanor Lavington

### SuDS and street greening

Walworth Road is an existing road located on the edge of the Heygate Estate and formed part of the masterplan for the wider regeneration of the estate. A section of the foot way to one side of the existing road has been remodelled to include wide areas of planting under retained mature trees, incorporating SuDS requirements. The section through the street integrates wide foot ways with planting, seating, cycle parking and informal play elements to improve the environment for pedestrians. The road is a key transport route and the foot way layout includes bus infrastructure elements.

## TURING WAY & EDDINGTON AVENUE. NORTHWEST CAMBRIDGE



© Maccreanor Lavington

### Cycling along major roads

Turing Way and Eddington Avenue form the primary street structure through the Northwest Cambridge development area. The streets are designed to accommodate bus routes, cycle paths and wide pedestrian foot ways alongside areas for car parking, street trees and SuDS elements. Segregated cycle paths are provided to each side of the street and are clearly marked to give priority to pedestrian movement. The streetscape design integrates seating at key locations, cycle parking and raised tables at key junctions.

## HARPER ROAD, LONDON HAWORTH TOMPKINS ARCHITECTS



© Fred Howarth, Grant Frazer

### New residential within historic character

Located on a side street in a formerly industrial part of London, the design creates a series of differing buildings facing the street. With a rich visual variety and mixed grain, the buildings contribute to defining an attractive street of commercial and residential ground floors and a diverse townscape of differing heights and material treatments.

# High Street South: intimate High Street

## EXISTING CONTEXT AND IDENTITY

The southern part of Watford High Street is currently characterised by a mix of retail including the Atria Shopping Centre, the church and churchyard green space, residential homes to the south and the pyramid building on the intersection of Beechen Grove and the High Street.

The central spine is shared by vehicles, diminishing the pedestrian character of this portion of the High Street. The buildings on either side of the High Street are approximately 3-4 stories in height. They consist of a mix of historic and contemporary buildings. The Atria Shopping Centre dominates the area behind shops on the north side of the High Street.

The church and churchyard provides a unique respite within the town centre. It is the only green space in the centre and provides an active travel route between the High Street and Exchange Road. The church building is of historic significance.

The pyramid building at the south end of the High Street is a landmark building and is located at a significant junction between the High Street connecting to Watford High Street Station. Currently, active travel access across the intersection is poor.

## CHALLENGES

- Reduced quality of the High Street environment due to narrow and inconsistent pavements and the street being shared by vehicles.
- No street greening.
- Poor and limited active travel crossings between the High Street and Watford High Street Station, due to the Exchange Road severance.
- The nature of Beechen Grove and Exchange Road creates a negative setting for buildings and their outlook, with large blank façades of the Atria Shopping Centre responding to this.
- Anti-social behaviour is occurring at the sensory garden at St. Mary's Church.

## ASPIRATIONS FOR THE AREA

The area has the potential to enhance the High Street setting, upgrading the quality of the public

space along the High Street with additional street greening, seating, and reduced vehicle access, creating a more pedestrian oriented environment. This will enhance the historic setting within the conservation area.

The churchyard green space offers a unique public space within the town centre and has the potential to become a more significant public space by enhancing the orientation and programme of the green space. Orienting the northern portion of the green space towards the High Street and including more formal landscaping with seating space; and enhancing the southern end of the green space to be more organic and park-like. The dominance of Church Street and the perpendicular parking should be reduced to integrate the eastern and western sides of the green, creating a larger green public space.

## POTENTIAL INTERVENTIONS

### Character & Townscape

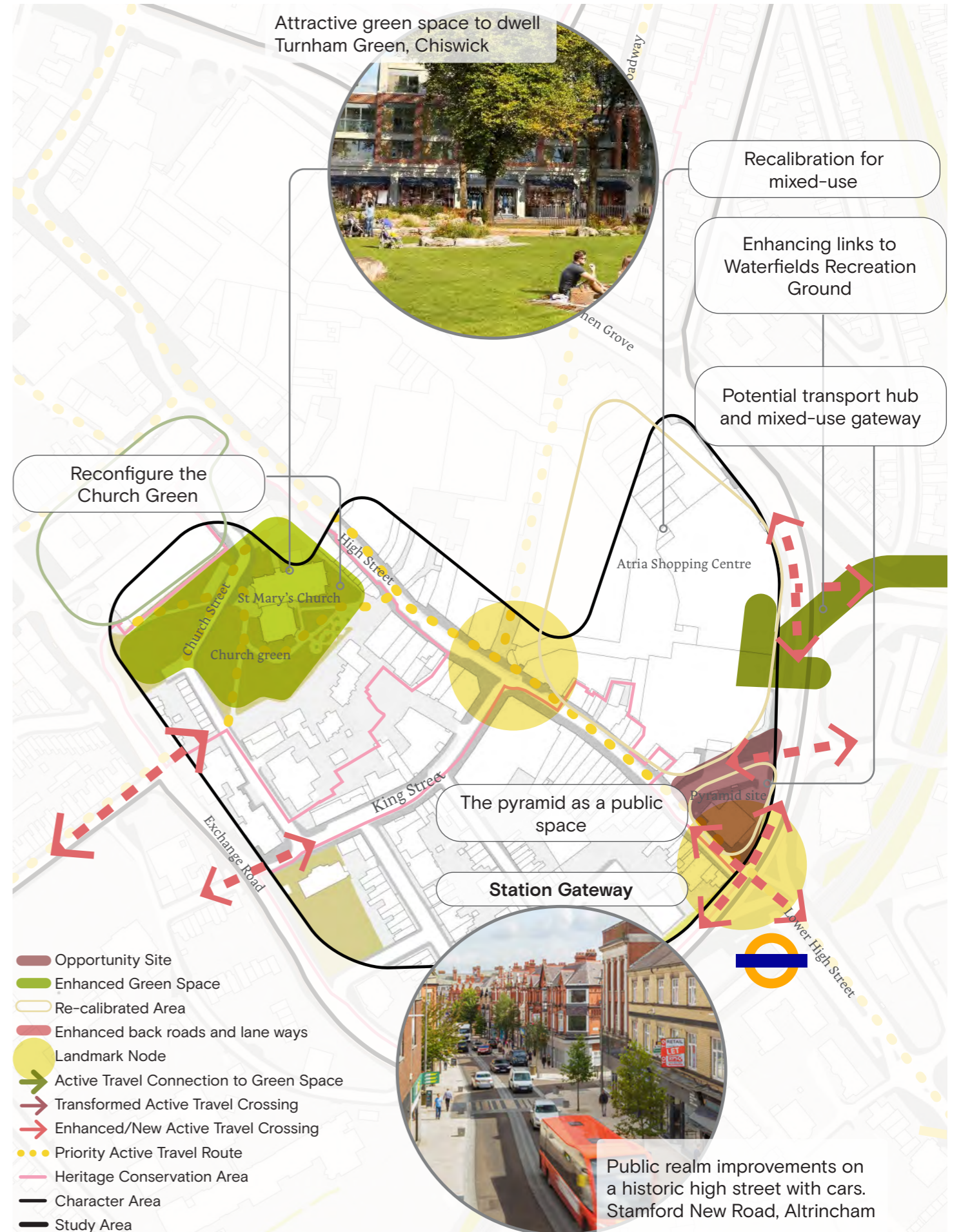
- Potential for redevelopment, intensification and introduction of a mix of uses to part of Atria Shopping Centre.
- Potential transport hub and/or a mixed-use gateway at the pyramid site.

### Public Realm

- Reconfigure the Church Green: orient the northern portion towards the High Street with additional landscaping and seating; and integrate the separate green spaces at the back of the church green to create a small shaded park
- Improve High Street with additional greening and enhanced pedestrian space.
- Opportunity to create a special arrival point onto the High Street from Watford High Street station.
- Potential for all streets to accommodate SuDS as part of a wider network strategy, and to introduce greening throughout.

### Movement

- Improve the active travel crossing between High Street and Watford High Street station
- Enhance active travel links to Waterfields Recreation Ground.



# Case Studies

## XANTEN GARDEN, BY PLANERGRUPPE OBERHAUSEN

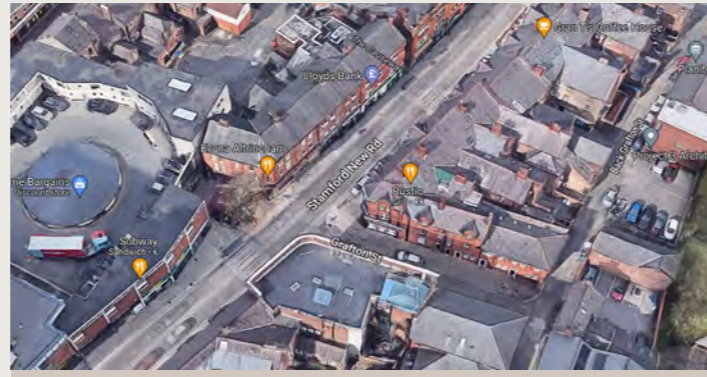


© Claudia Dreyße

### Attractive green space to dwell with heritage building

An existing green area and upgraded to become contemporary with an emphasis on the historical structures. The green space offers expand a classic spa garden and a “Park of Encounter” that is barrier-free. The park is characterized by generous grass and meadow areas planted with groups of trees, single trees and shrubs. The green areas are traversed by a hierarchical path system, which we partially re-arranged and adapted in the course of the re-design and accommodate cycling and walking. The planting of perennials accentuate the access to the park, from which the main path can always be reached.

## STAMFORD NEW ROAD, ALTRINCHAM



© Alex Upton Photography

### Public realm improvements on a historic high street with cars.

Altrincham, winner of the 2018 Great British High Street ‘town centre’ award, has also invested in the public realm—with landscaping, street furniture and planting and enhanced pedestrian prioritised streets within a heritage street setting. This investment in the public realm has significantly contributed to the success and regeneration of the high street.

## THE SCENE, WALTHAMSTOW BY POLLARD THOMAS EDWARDS



© Pollard Thomas Edwards

### Mixed-use residential & commercial

The project creates a mixed use, mixed tenure development, near to public transport, enhancing the whole quality of the street and bringing life to the area.

## CENTRAL STATION, ROTTERDAM



### Walking and cycling crossing over road at the entrance to a station

The crossing between the city and Rotterdam Central station is located at the intersection of a main road thoroughfare through the city. At the junction, pedestrian and cyclists are prioritised by extending the material of the station square across the road, narrowing the road and slowing down cars.

The hierarchy of pedestrian, cyclists and then vehicles is clear through the design of the space utilising orientation and materials.

# Market Street: new focus on public space beyond vehicular movement

## EXISTING CONTEXT AND IDENTITY

Market Street is a local high street within the town centre and consists of a mix of historic buildings with a retail ground floor and 1-2 stories of residential above. The independent stores within narrow buildings are flanked by pavements that are often occupied by bins and spill out from shops, limiting pedestrian movement.

The car dominated narrow street is a single, one way lane with a lane of parking on either side. The street lacks trees or greening within the public environment.

Active travel access across Exchange Road is poor due to narrow pavements and a three lane road. The Holy Rood Catholic Church marks the gateway to the town centre, though it is surrounded by some poorly maintained contemporary buildings framing the intersection.

## CHALLENGES

- The active travel crossing across Exchange Road is extremely poor and severs Market Street into two parts.
- The eastern part of Market Street has a dedicated bike lane but this does not continue across the Exchange Road to the western part of market Street and beyond the town centre.
- Poor public realm lacking active travel routes, clear and quality paving and street greening.
- Car dominated environment.

## ASPIRATIONS FOR THE AREA

Market Street has the potential to improve its character, strengthen its identity as a local high street and further support the town centre. There is opportunity to transform the currently car dominated space to become a more public and active travel focussed street. This will improve the setting of the historic buildings on the street, make it easier to access on foot and enhance the setting for the commercial activity, with more dedicated space for them to spill put into the public space. The two parts of Market Street can become one continuous space.

## POTENTIAL INTERVENTIONS

### Character & Townscape

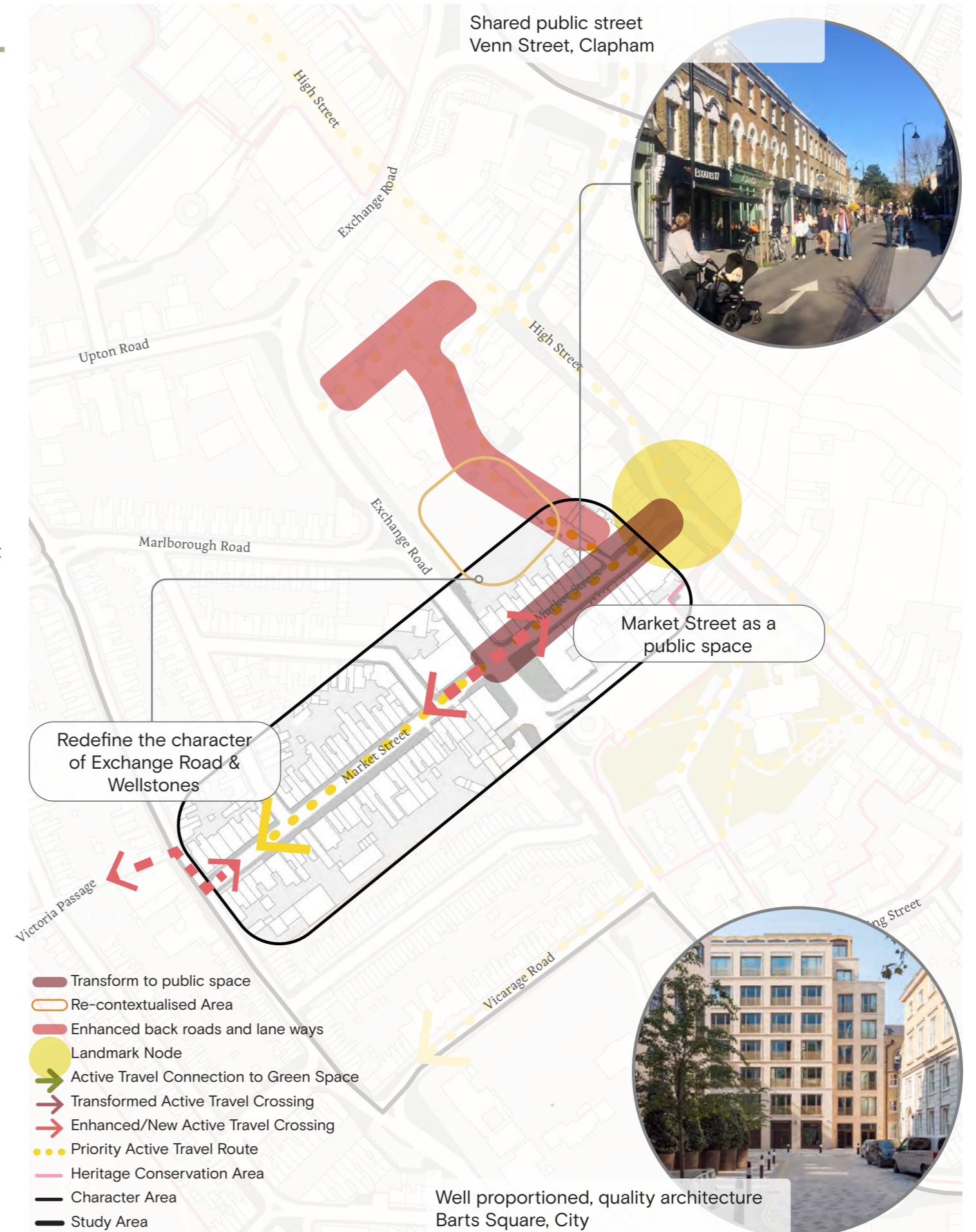
- Transform Market Street into a public space

### Public Realm

- Create a positive public realm landmark node on the High Street at the transition to Market Street.
- Re-imagine Market Street as a public space rather than a vehicular highway by reducing car dominance, widening pavements and introducing landscaping with seating.
- Potential for all streets to accommodate SuDS as part of a wider network strategy, and to introduce greening throughout.

### Movement

- Enhance active travel connections from the High Street, across Exchange Road along Market Street and out towards Victoria Passage.





# Case Studies

## VENN STREET, CLAPHAM BY URBAN MOVEMENT



© Macaulay Walk

### Shared public street

Typical of many streets, they are dominated by kerbside parking on both sides of the carriageway. The outdoor seating for the street's cafes and restaurants were restricted to narrow strips adjacent to the building frontage, limiting the streets commercial potential and forcing pedestrians into single file due to narrow foot ways. Resident and business parking bays were relocated to both ends of the street freeing up space in the middle. A single flush 'shared' surface was created to accommodate tables and chairs, trees, seats, cycle stands and whilst maintaining through traffic. A weekend road closure now allows the market to operate weekly.

## EXHIBITION ROAD, SOUTH KENSINGTON

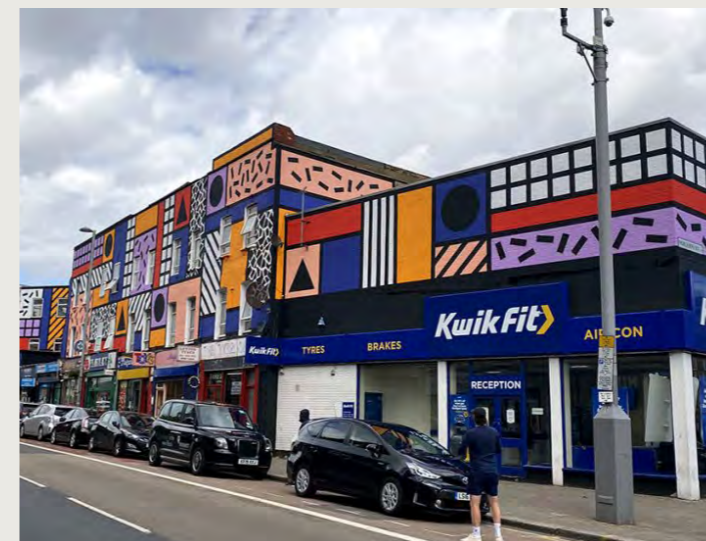


© Twitter: @stefanosutter

### Shared public street

Priority is given to pedestrians and cyclists for crossing throughout the entire length of the street. The surface of the street is flush surface and accommodates a multi-modal carriageway. An attractive environment is created for cafes and restaurants to spill out into and create active edges to the street.

## WALALA PARADE, LEYTON HIGH STREET ABSOLUTELY STUDIO



### Facade upgrades on buildings

Leyton High Road, home to the vibrant community in Leytonstone, East London, has been transformed with a colourful and innovative design, with the efforts of local residents and artists.

The addition to Leyton High Road has re-energised the urban landscape with an explosion of creativeness, colour and joy above the shops and cafes.

## HIGH STREET, WALTHAMSTOW



### Shared street surface

Priority is given to pedestrians and cyclists with continuous paving across the carriageway. The street is flanked by active uses at ground floor. The street is multi modal carriageway but prioritises active travel with flush surfaces across the carriageway and pavements.

# Queen's Road: an extension to the town centre

## EXISTING CONTEXT AND IDENTITY

The Queen's Road character consists of a local high street at its heart with a mix of retail use on the ground floor and residential above. The narrow, one way street is flanked by commercial activity on either side, interspersed with some residential ground floors. The pavement is narrow, limiting active travel movement, which is further impeded by disorganised bins filling the public space.

The historic buildings are a consistent ground floor plus 2 stories above, with majority brick façades. There is no planting or trees on the street, and vehicles and parking dominate the narrow street. The active travel connection between the town centre and Queen's Road is via an underpass that moves through the Atria Shopping Centre on the south side of Beechen Grove. The Broadway is therefore separated from the rest of the town centre.

## CHALLENGES

- Car dominated street environment.
- Narrow pavement that is often occupied and limited by other uses such as bins or open car doors.
- No street greening.
- The underpass does not currently allow cycling access.
- Discontinuous character from the Queen's Road to the Broadway.
- Poor gateway visibility from the town centre towards The Broadway beyond.
- Lacks a clear identity.
- Mixed ownership of retail units, and poor quality of some of the units.

## ASPIRATIONS FOR THE AREA

Create a strong identity for the area and integrate it with the town centre more positively. The area should be seen as a seamless and natural extension to the town centre with a diverse offer of complimentary retail and commercial activity.

Connect the area more closely to the town centre across Beechen Grove as a natural extension to the town centre with clear way finding between the two

areas. This connection should prioritise all forms of active travel.

## POTENTIAL INTERVENTIONS

### Character & Townscape

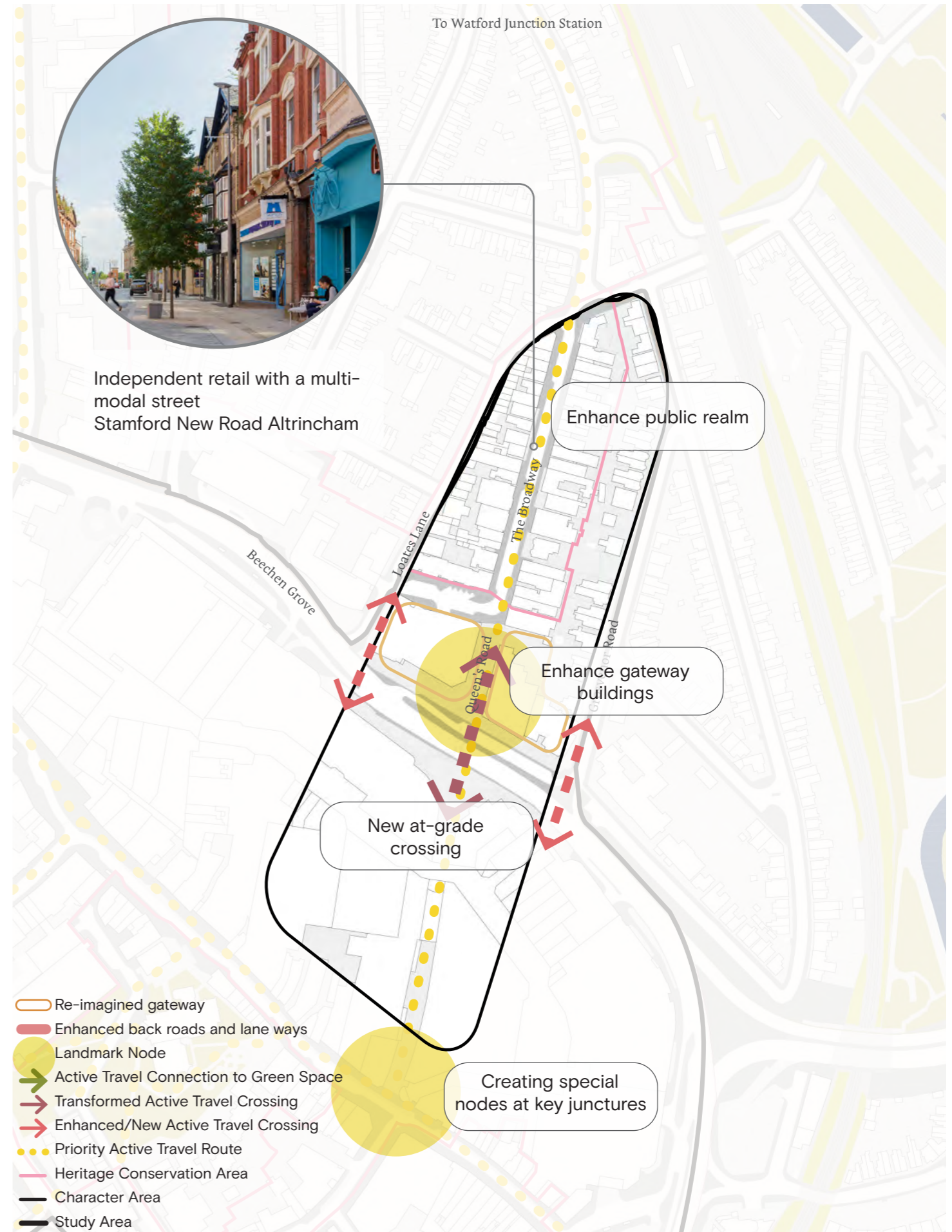
- Enhance the buildings at the junction of Queens Road and Beechen Grove to create a more positive gateway.

### Public Realm

- Improve the quality of the public space within Queen Street and the Broadway by reducing car dominance and improving paving, introducing street greening and seating.
- Potential for all streets to accommodate SuDS as part of a wider network strategy, and to introduce greening throughout.

### Movement

- Improve active travel connection at the intersections of Queen's Road, Grosvenor Road and Loates Lane with Beechen Grove.
- Create an at-grade active travel crossing over Beechen Grove to connect Queen's Road to the town centre.



# Clarendon Road: linear space connecting the town centre to the station

## EXISTING CONTEXT AND IDENTITY

The Clarendon Road character area is characterised by employment uses along its length with recently renovated quality paving and planting within the public realm.

The buildings consists of a mix of historic and contemporary buildings of approximately 4-6 stories. The buildings are also set back from the street to allow for a small parking or planting area at the interface of the building with the public realm.

The junction between Clarendon Road and the Town Centre at Beechen Grove is marked by the Beechen Grove Baptist Church, a historic building in the town. The crossing at this intersection has improved to include wider pavements and planting within the public realm.

## CHALLENGES

- Haphazard parking in front of some buildings.
- Reduction in Professional, Scientific & Technical employment.
- High concentration of a mostly homogeneous commercial use.
- The connection to the town centre is severed by Beechen Grove.

## ASPIRATIONS FOR THE AREA

Bolster the identity of Clarendon Road as a cohesive and mixed business district that has a clear character. The area has the potential to diversity its commercial offer to include smaller workspaces, such as co-working spaces, to accommodate independent businesses.

The active travel link between the area and the town centre and Watford Junction Station can be improved by reducing the impact of the severance caused by Beechen Grove. There is potential to diversify the mix of uses in the area.

## POTENTIAL INTERVENTIONS

### Character & Townscape

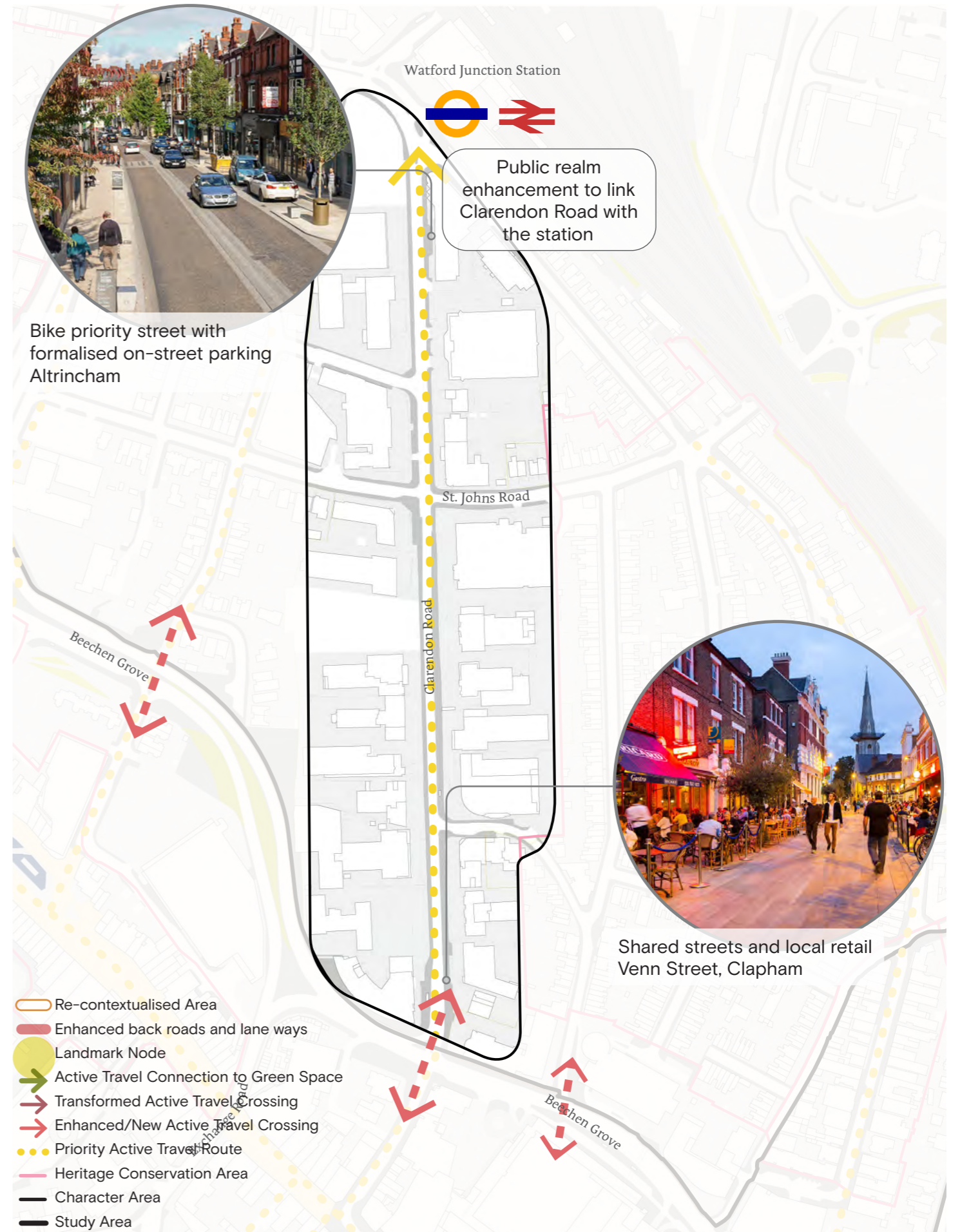
- Expand the offer of employment typologies.

### Public Realm

- Improve the crossing across Beechen Grove with pedestrian and cycling priority.
- Create a more positive public space to link Clarendon Road with the station.

### Movement

- Enhance active travel connection across Beechen Grove, connecting the two parts of Clarendon Road more closely and prioritising active travel.
- Create a continuous active travel route from the High Street, along Clarendon Road and towards Watford Junction Station.



# Case Studies

## STAMFORD NEW ROAD, ALTRINCHAM



<https://visitaltrincham.com>

### Independent retail with a multi-modal street

This project aims to transform the vehicle-dominated streets and spaces of the town centre into pedestrian-friendly environments that encourage footfall, engagement, dwell time and interaction.

A key goal is to enhance pedestrianised areas in order to slow down pedestrian movement. Another will reduce vehicle movement through the town centre in order to transform vehicular dominated streets into pedestrian and cycle friendly streets.

### Bike priority street with formalised on-street parking

Works to Altrincham's historic high street 'Stamford New Road' were undertaken as part of a range of public realm improvements intended to improve the economic vitality of the town centre. Located in a conservation area the works included introducing narrowed carriageways and courtesy crossings to slow traffic speeds and improve movement for pedestrians and cyclists. Wider foot ways include tree planting and street furniture and provide opportunities for retail frontages to utilise the space for café seating and tables making an active and lively street.

# DELIVERY APPROACH

# DELIVERY APPROACH

## Principles of delivery

This Town Centre Framework marks a step change for Watford and its delivery will require partners to work closely together to secure tangible change. The Framework provides a clear roadmap that stakeholders can get behind and progress at pace.

It does, however, come at a challenging time. The public sector has fewer resources than ever before and COVID-19, Brexit and other macro-economic factors are having fundamental impacts on public sector capacity, on local businesses and on residents. Partners therefore will need to be innovative in their approach to delivery, where possible drawing on the principles set out below.

### Watford Town Centre Framework delivery principles:

**Collaboration and Partnership:** Making the most of opportunities to work collaboratively to share resources and accelerate, positively shape, secure 'marriage value' and refine delivery;

**Positivity and Problem Solving:** Approaching delivery positively and having a 'can do attitude' to solving problems and overcoming barriers;

**Commitment and Focus:** A shared long-term commitment to responding to the challenges and opportunities identified and driving forward delivery;

**Innovation and Creativity:** Experimenting with innovative project ideas and exploring innovative approaches to leverage funding; and,

**Agility and Pace:** Working rapidly together to deliver change and continuously reviewing projects to ensure they respond to changing needs.

## Focus of delivery

A mix of short-term, medium-term and long-term proposed physical interventions are identified as a high-level action plan. Alongside these physical interventions, the Framework has identified non-physical actions that need to be progressed, in many cases to enable physical change to manifest.

The approach to consider change on a phased basis has been designed intentionally to ensure that positive outcomes can be secured incrementally over time. It is intended those early interventions will catalyse wider investment from businesses, residents, developers, and investors as other projects come forward.

The next step for each intervention will be to progress them towards becoming fully 'shovel ready' so that all the information and arrangements are in place for delivery. This will involve undertaking further feasibility work where required.

A summary of all the physical interventions is broken down by theme (i.e. Development Sites, Public Space and Movement).

These will be supported by a range of non-physical interventions, and projects specifically focused on diversifying and improving the resilience of the town centre and boosting the local economy. These are summarised in the bullets below. It is important to note that these non-physical actions are, at this stage, suggested areas for exploration. Many of these do not yet have identified sources of funding and will require further planning and investigation into feasibility before they can be formalised and progressed – the status of each is highlighted below.

- **D1 – PLACE BRANDING AND MARKETING:** Following the introduction of new types of town centre businesses and uses, use consumer messaging platforms to launch Watford's newly-developed place brand to attract different types of people to visit a revitalised Town Centre (Continue).
- **D2 – RETAIL INNOVATION GRANTS/LOANS:** Work with Hertfordshire Growth Hub to explore the potential role of small grants and loans to support independent retailers looking to evolve their business model to better meet consumer

needs (e.g. by physically adapting their units and purchasing any necessary equipment/technology) and to support retail entrepreneurs with innovative ideas that will enhance the Town Centre offer (Explore).

- **D3 – RETAIL BUSINESS SUPPORT PROGRAMME:** Work with Hertfordshire Growth Hub to secure funding for a retail expert to provide intensive 1-1 support for independent high street businesses to help them adapt their offering to better meet consumer expectations and increase revenue (e.g. related to digital engagement, marketing, customer service, nudge tactics etc). Link this up with the University of Hertfordshire's Young Entrepreneur Project to support young people to set up and scale town centre businesses (Explore).
  - **D4 – INWARD INVESTMENT CAMPAIGN:** Use consumer messaging platforms to launch a concerted inward investment campaign to encourage businesses to take up new space coming forward on Clarendon Road (Action).
  - **D5 – CLARENDON ROAD BID OR OTHER PARTNERSHIP:** Explore opportunities and appetite to expand the Business Improvement District to support business and property owners focused on the promotion of Clarendon Road as a key employment location (Action).
  - **D6 – BUSINESS BOOTSTRAP/ ACCELERATOR PROGRAMME:** Work with WENTA, Hertfordshire Growth Hub and other partners to secure funding to set up or commission an accelerator/ bootstrap programme to support entrepreneurs and promising businesses in new workspaces (e.g. Innovation Hub) to rapidly scale-up, grow and create new employment opportunities for local people (Explore).
  - **D7 – BUSINESS SUPPORT PROGRAMME:** Work with the Hertfordshire Growth Hub to secure funding to set up or commission a programme to help existing small and medium sized enterprises grow and become more efficient, particularly in sectors that the Town Centre needs to retain (e.g. Professional, Scientific and Technical Activities) (Explore).
  - **D8 – CAR PARKING STUDY:** Council to undertake review of car parking capacity against demand.
- This will help identify locations that are suitable for release for re-development, and should be undertaken alongside the findings of this Framework including consideration of sites that have specific development potential / wider non-parking contribution to explore (Continue).
- **E1 – INCUBATOR UNITS:** Undertake feasibility and business case analysis to further understand the potential to deliver low-cost retail incubator units that allow independent entrepreneurs to test and scale new high street concepts (e.g. within Council assets or new developments), either as formal developments or within meanwhile/ temporary space (Explore).
  - **E2 – MEANWHILE USES:** Devise a meanwhile strategy to run throughout the Framework implementation period to identify meanwhile opportunities (including sites awaiting redevelopment) that allow independent businesses to test market demand for different products and services. Strategy to consider funding, delivery and monitoring / evaluation to inform year on year programme evolution. Key opportunity sites include the multi-storey car park and retail units that become vacant (Explore).
  - **E3 – FOOD INCUBATOR:** Work with West Herts College to undertake feasibility and business case analysis to explore opportunities to create a food incubator with local colleges to help develop the restaurateurs of tomorrow, and 'seed and feed' meanwhile and start-up space (Explore).

# Phasing of delivery

## YEARS

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Development Sites										
Public Space Interventions										
Movement Interventions										
Non-Physical Interventions										
High Street Diversification Projects										

### Delivery Timescales

Note: Years 1-2 (green) indicate short term interventions, 3-5 (yellow) indicate medium term interventions and 6-10 (red) indicate longer term interventions.

The programme of delivery across the interventions identified assumes a circa 10-year delivery programme. This is summarised within the table above which provides high-level assumptions on timings for each intervention by type. The reality is that, in some cases, individual interventions will come forward more quickly or slowly than shown below but this provides a broad understanding of how delivery could be realised. More detail on each category is provided below and in Appendix A.

### Development Sites

Factors such as scheme design, feasibility, viability, vacant possession and progression through the planning process all impact the speed at which development sites across the Town Centre can be delivered. Given this, development site interventions are spread across both the medium-term and the long-term.

Some of the most progressed developments and therefore more immediate interventions are likely to be the Town Hall Quarter (Site A1), the Sainsbury's and PRYZM sites (Site A2), Exchange House (Site A5), Wellstones Car Park (Site A6), and Queens Road (Sites A9/A10). These sites are all considered to be medium-term interventions with no extant consents in place to support delivery in the next 1-2 years.

Longer-term interventions are less progressed or more complex schemes. These include but are not limited to, Gade Car Park (Site A3) and the Church Car Park (Site A8) which are subject to an ongoing review of car parking requirements across the Town Centre, Atria (Site A11) which is subject to an ongoing

review of the future of the shopping centre, and the Pyramid Site (A12) which will require ongoing feasibility and preferred options testing.

### Public Space Interventions

Most public space interventions are expected to be tied to delivery of the development sites as many sit within their boundaries. These interventions are therefore likely to come forward as part of development schemes so are expected to be delivered over the medium- and long-term.

Other public space interventions that sit outside development plots are likely to be funded, at least in part, by Section 106 (S106) contributions and other public sector funding pots. Some of these can be delivered relatively quickly where funding can be secured early, but others will take longer to come forward where additional funding and developer contributions are required.

### Movement Interventions

A key project which could deliver earlier impact is the Town Hall Quarter site which has already undergone extensive feasibility testing, masterplanning and transport analysis. Currently, Rickmansworth Road isolates the area from the wider Town Centre, and therefore interventions C1, C2, C3 and C4 will be essential to the delivery of a successful scheme providing much-needed linkages between the new development and the core of the Town Centre. These are therefore likely to be delivered as part of the scheme and are likely to be seen as early 'enablers' to wider development and change across the

northern part of the centre.

Wider movement interventions across the Town Centre will also be important to improve the centre environment and enhance accessibility to people living outside of the ring road. However, at this stage, it is challenging to address phasing as no technical highways analysis or capacity modelling has been undertaken. Further studies and analysis will therefore be required to understand the deliverability and preferred options for bringing the schemes set out in the Framework forward.

Given the sustainable town centre location, it is unlikely that movement interventions will need to precede developments for capacity purposes. However, identifying some strategic early movement interventions has the potential to improve town centre perception, and optimise results from subsequent developments. Following more detailed highways input, we would recommend identifying priority movement interventions and creating an action plan.

Whilst it is challenging to outline funding for these without any detail on the nature of interventions, there may be scope to fund early 'enablers' via public sector funding and recover monies at a later date via S106 contributions.

### High Street Diversification Projects and Non-Physical Interventions

It is fundamental that as part of the implementation of the Framework, that the 'quality' or perception of quality of the place in the Town Centre is improved. This is a focus for public intervention as it will encourage visitors, attract new businesses and raise property values catalysing development and investment.

In delivery terms there is a need to build market interest and confidence in the Town Centre over time, co-ordinating existing investment, events programmes and other interventions to create a stronger overall 'brand' for the Town Centre. This will encourage greater usage and, in turn, improve the viability position for future development.

High street diversification projects and non-physical interventions are therefore expected to be prioritised

in the short-term, subject to securing funding, to ensure that there is an offer within the Town Centre that attracts new residents, activities and businesses. Those focused on place branding (D1 Place Branding and Marketing) and diversifying the Town Centre offer (e.g. D2, D3, E1, E2, E3) should be prioritised for delivery over the short term.

These will be supported by targeted events, pop-up activities and meanwhile uses led by the BID to help 'new' residents and businesses as well as existing communities find new opportunities to engage with the Town Centre.

A range of other non-physical interventions are also important to ensure that the economic benefits of physical interventions focused on supporting economic growth are maximised. These need to come forward alongside or ahead of physical interventions to deliver the greatest economic benefits possible. Examples include business support programmes (e.g. D6-D7) and inward investment campaigns (D4).

As previously noted these non-physical actions are, at this stage, suggested areas for exploration. Some are already being undertaken by the Council but some are longer-term options that are aspirational. These will require additional sources of funding to be secured as well as further planning and investigation into feasibility before they can be formalised and progressed. Section 4 of the appended table details the status of the Council's current involvement relative to each intervention to aid this process.

### Catalytic Projects

There is also an opportunity for the Council to prioritise and put resource behind potential catalytic projects that will have major economic and social benefits for the Town Centre, and have the potential to kickstart major development elsewhere in the centre. The Town Hall Quarter development (Site A1), envisaged as a medium-term intervention, clearly sits within this bracket. Other opportunities where the Council can exercise some agency could also be accelerated to drive forward wider delivery. Following the completion of the car parking review, Gade Car Park (Site A3) and Church Car Park (Site A8) may present good opportunities to do this.



## Nature of delivery

There are a number of actions the Council can take to support the delivery of the Framework's objectives and ensure a comprehensive approach to regeneration. The actions available to the Council are largely dependent on the specific circumstances surrounding each intervention. These have been split out and considered in more detail in the text below:

### Development Sites in Council Ownership

There are several potential development sites across the Town Centre currently in Council ownership. Examples include the Gade and Church Car Park sites (A3, A8) and the Pyramid Site (A12). Whilst some of the Market Site (A4) sits within Council ownership, if there is aspiration to pursue a more comprehensive development here and demonstration of marriage value by doing so, this would require some third party land assembly. The same is true of site A3, with Gade House, the adjacent plot in private ownership.

These sites present a significant opportunity to directly deliver on the Framework's vision and objectives. There are a number of delivery routes which could be pursued that offer a range of risk and reward profiles. These include:

- **Self-delivery:** Where all of the construction and sales risks are borne by a single party. This does have the benefit that all the returns also flow back to that same party, however, presents an additional degree of risk. This is suitable for sites that are wholly within the Council's control and are unlikely to involve integrating adjacent sites (e.g. A8 Church Car Park)
- **Joint Venture:** These are typical for larger more complex sites as they can be costly and lengthy to establish. Under a joint venture agreement both parties tend to operate on a 50/50 basis to bring forward a scheme with costs and returns shared amongst partners. This structure can be quite common between the public and private sector, as has been demonstrated through the procurement of a private sector development partner at the Town Hall Quarter (Site A1).
- **Development Agreement:** This is a land sale where there are obligations around performance such as planning consent and programme timing placed by the landowner on the developer. In the event that these conditions are not satisfactorily met, there are remedies for breach which can

include step in rights or an option to take the land back. This can work in circumstances where the Council would like to see more comprehensive development, but retain some level of control (e.g. A3 Gade Car Park and Gade House).

- **Land Sale:** This can be on the basis of 'Subject to Planning' or 'Unconditional', where a parcel of land is typically sold to a developer in return for an upfront sum of money. There are very few conditions attached to the sale so if the scheme does not progress there is little the former landowner can do to drive delivery.
- **Strategic Master Developer:** This is where a developer takes an oversight role in achieving a planning consent (often hybrid) for a large/complex site. The delivery of these sites can then either be taken forward by the developer, or often, plots of land are sold to individual parties to deliver in accordance with the planning obtained. This approach is often taken with large and complex sites where the strategic developer wants to mitigate their risk position.

### Development Sites in Private Ownership

There are also a range of important development sites in private ownership, including the Sainsbury's and PRYZM sites (A2), Gade House (A3), parts of the wider Watford Market site (A4), Exchange House (A5), Wellstones (A6, A7), Queens Road (A9, A10) and the Atria (A11). While the Council does not have direct control over these sites, there are options for the Council to take a 'hands-on' or non-hands-on role as appropriate.

In the case of Gade House (A3) and the wider Watford Market site (A4), where the Council owns plots adjacent to privately owned development sites, there is an opportunity to deliver more comprehensive schemes that could better align to the Framework's vision and objectives. Given Gade House (A3) is in single ownership, subject to the outcome of the car park review, a Development Agreement on the car park site may be a prudent approach to ensure delivery of a more comprehensive scheme.

Conversely, the complex ownership dynamics in the plots surrounding the market at Site A4 lends itself to a land assembly process. This is best undertaken when a site (or sites) in third party ownership are

not coming forward for development due to their complexity. The Council may require a Compulsory Purchase Order (CPO) in order to achieve the comprehensive approach to delivery that it requires. A more detailed masterplan and feasibility exercise for this site would however be required before any action is taken.

For the remaining sites, which sit solely in private ownership, positive development management is the best means of ensuring positive outcomes in line with the Framework's objectives. The Council can take a positive approach to development management by:

- Capturing and steering emerging proposals through pro-active pre-application discussions.
- Continuing to produce and evolve planning policies and frameworks that reflect the Town Centre's changing context including production of Area Action Plan(s) and Supplementary Planning Document(s) as appropriate.
- Using the Place Shaping Panel to review and improve emerging schemes.
- Shaping proposals and securing high quality details/specification through the effective use of planning conditions and obligations, and potential adoption of a Design Code for the Town Centre.
- Using planning conditions to minimise disruption during construction.
- Using planning obligations to secure on-site and off-site infrastructure (including social infrastructure) delivery, mitigation measures and financial contributions for local training/job brokerage and use of local services/businesses.

### Public Realm Interventions

The Council's role in the delivery of public realm will largely be defined by ownership dynamics. Public space interventions that sit within privately owned development sites will be delivered and likely funded by the developer as part of the scheme. As set out above, under development sites in private ownership, the Council has the ability to shape the nature of space coming forward through the planning process.

For sites in public sector ownership, the responsibility will sit with the Council to deliver these interventions through active discussion with Hertfordshire County Council. As discussed,

these may be funded, or part funded through S106 contributions. The ongoing responsibility for management of these spaces following their development will need to be considered by the Council. The long-term management and stewardship of any public realm delivered will be an important consideration for the Council.

The Framework is a long-term ambition and therefore it is absolutely crucial that long-term stewardship and management strategies are in place and implemented across any new and retained built environment. These strategies will ensure the quality of the built environment remains high – and that the experience of the place is optimised. This includes consideration of public realm which crosses both public and private sector ownership and potentially management.

The Council does not have a pre-determined view of how management arrangements are established and does not require the establishment of management companies as part of future development but will require evidence of place management supporting new development, public realm and landscaping as part of the planning application process – and to support decision making regarding scheme design and materials used.

### Non-Physical Interventions

Where funding is available, non-physical interventions will be important short-term enhancements to attract new visitors and businesses and create the optimal environment for subsequent physical interventions over the medium-longer term. The Council may seek assistance from partners such as consultants, the Business Improvement District, the Chamber of Commerce, and business support providers as necessary to progress non-physical interventions. Where appropriate it will also work with the private sector.

### High Street Diversification Projects

Similarly, town centre interventions present a short-term opportunity for the Council to drive positive change across the Town Centre. The introduction of incubator units (E1 and E3) and meanwhile uses (E2) may require delivery support from private landowners, operators and other partners.

# Management of delivery

The Council has acknowledged its responsibility for supporting the delivery of change in Watford Town Centre by leading on the commissioning of this work. However, given no project is within the sole gift of one delivery partner, it is clear that successful delivery will require partnership working.

The Council will therefore continue to work collaboratively with partners to support a comprehensive approach to regeneration across the Town Centre. This will include:

- Progression of the establishment of a joint venture partnership with private sector partners to deliver the proposed regeneration of the Town Hall Quarter (A1) and consider opportunities to deliver additional catalytic sites at relevant points to support regeneration aims and objectives defined within the framework.
- Use this Framework to bid for public sector funding pots that are targeted towards local authorities.
- Work collaboratively with landowners and developers to shape new development via the planning process.
- Direct deliver non-physical and high street diversification projects with partners.
- Work with the Watford Business District (BID) and Chamber of Commerce to realise shared objectives for the Town Centre.
- Engage with the Environment Agency, Natural England, Historic England and others over strategically important historic and nature conservation issues and share intelligence as appropriate with the private sector to enable positive accommodation within project designs.
- Support private sector engagement with Homes England to maximise funding to deliver affordable housing.
- Work closely with Hertfordshire County Council to bring forward movement and active travel interventions.
- Establish strong working relationships with Hertfordshire County Council to delivery high quality public space schemes.

- Use planning policy to ensure optimum uses are maintained across the town centre.

To help deliver on the above, the Council may consider establishing an officer level Delivery Board, led by the Group Head of Place Shaping, but including local delivery partners. The Board will be responsible for overseeing day-to-day work on:

- Co-ordinating and driving forward the delivery of the Framework's vision and objectives.
- Commissioning further studies and strategies.
- On-going engagement with local people and businesses (including the Watford BID and Chamber of Commerce).
- On-going liaison with infrastructure providers and developers to co-ordinate works.
- Liaison with other Boards (including the Place Shaping Panel).
- Monitoring overall progress against identified milestones.
- Assessing the economic and social impact of development over time.

## FUNDING OF DELIVERY

A wide range of public and private funding sources will be needed to deliver the interventions set out in this Framework. Where possible funding will be secured from private sector developers, both via direct delivery on development sites and through S106 agreements and CIL monies. However, in some circumstances public sector funding will be needed to optimise outcomes. Some example sources of funding that could be considered are set out below:

- The UK Shared prosperity fund (prioritising investment in community and place, supporting local businesses and people and skills).
- Levelling up Fund (Supporting town centre and high street regeneration, local transport projects and cultural and heritage assets).
- Brownfield Land Release Fund (Targeting Council-owned small sites that have been previously developed, and where viability issues have prevented their development. Additionally, funding available for Homes England to deploy

on non-Council owned sites to enable brownfield delivery).

- Homes England Brownfield Infrastructure Land Fund (Nature of programme and scale of funding available to be confirmed in Autumn 2022).
- Community Ownership Fund (To support community groups to take ownership of assets and amenities at risk of being lost).
- Affordable Homes Programme (Grant funding to support the capital costs of developing affordable housing for rent or sale).
- Council general fund reserves/borrowing.

The Council will also consider its own borrowing potential and risk profile to understand the role it could take in direct delivery.

It will be important for the Council to continuously review funding the sources available to support the delivery of Framework objectives as the options available will change over the medium-term. Some competitor councils have appointed dedicated officers to track, monitor and oversee funding opportunities which may be an option for Watford Borough Council.

The Framework can also be used to engage with and lobby Government departments to secure funding over the medium and longer term. Important Government departments to place focus on as delivery on the Framework evolves include, but are not limited to:

- Department for Levelling Up Housing and Communities – Focus on development sites, public realm, movement, non-physical interventions and high street diversification interventions.
- Department for Transport – Focus on movement.
- Department for Business Energy Industrial and Strategy – Focus on movement.
- Department for Education – Focus on education.
- Homes England – Focus on development sites, public realm, movement, non-physical interventions and high street diversification interventions, plus affordable homes delivery.

- Historic England – Focus on development sites and protection of town centre heritage.
- Natural England – Focus on public space.
- National Lottery – Focus on non-physical interventions and high street diversification interventions.

It would be prudent for the Council to develop an engagement and awareness raising programme with these departments to ensure the borough is in the best place possible to secure future funding.

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# Agenda Item 6

Part A

**Report to:** Cabinet

**Date of meeting:** 13 March 2023

**Report author:** Associate Director of Planning, Infrastructure and Economy

**Title:** Authority Monitoring Report 2021/22

## 1.0 Summary

1.1 The Authority Monitoring Report (AMR) outlines progress made against a variety of targets and indicators that can be used to assess the effectiveness of individual planning policies, and whether the wider Local Plan objectives are being met.

1.2 This AMR (Appendix 1), including an executive summary, covers the period from the 1 April 2021 - 31 March 2022, which is known as the 'monitoring year'. This is the first year in which the AMR reports on policies in the newly adopted Watford Local Plan 2021-2038.

## 2.0 Risks

2.1 The AMR includes factual data relating to a range of development that has taken place over the monitoring year and so there are considered to be very few inherent risks associated with this report.

<b>Nature of risk</b>	<b>Consequence</b>	<b>Suggested Control Measures</b>	<b>Response</b> (treat, tolerate, terminate or transfer)	<b>Risk Rating</b> (combination of severity and likelihood)
The AMR can highlight Instances of planning policies not performing as intended	Criticism from media and the public regarding planning decisions and current trends  Implementation of ineffective planning policies resulting in planning decisions that do not effectively contribute to the	Continued monitoring and reporting on the effectiveness of planning policies set out in the Local Plan.	Tolerate	2x2=4

	<p>objectives in the Watford Local Plan</p> <p>In the long term, highlights the potential need for a review of the Local Plan</p>			
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2.2 The AMR includes an analysis of the data for each indicator, explaining the results and their implications for the Local Plan going forward. This should provide additional information and context for readers of the document which will minimise the potential for criticism and allow the Council to explain the results that are being reported. If any criticism or comment on the progress outlined in the report is received, this will be dealt with on a case by case basis.

### 3.0 Recommendations

3.1 That, the members of this Cabinet note the contents of the attached AMR, Appendix 1, and agree for it to be published.

**Further information:**

Thomas Shaw  
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**Report approved by:** Jack Green, Spatial Planning Manager

### 4.0 Detailed proposal

4.1 The Localism Act (2011) requires Local Planning Authorities to publish monitoring information at least annually. This is usually done through the publication of an Authority Monitoring Report (AMR).

4.2 The Watford Local Plan (2021-2038) was adopted in October 2022 replacing the Watford Core Strategy (2013) and saved policies in the District Plan (2000). It includes a new monitoring framework (Appendix A in the Watford Local Plan) setting out how the Council is intending to monitor the policies in the Plan, and performance relative to specific targets where appropriate. The 2021/2022 monitoring year is the first year of the newly adopted plan period and therefore this year's AMR is the first which monitors their effectiveness.

4.3 There is no set structure or prescribed content for an AMR but there are several elements set out in regulations as minimum requirements that an AMR must include. These are listed below and are complied with in the report, however, given

that the Local Plan has so recently been adopted (i) is not considered significant at this stage:

- i. A Local Development Scheme setting out a timetable for Local Plan production;
- ii. The boroughs performance against the housing delivery targets in the development plan;
- iii. Any Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) payments the authority has received;
- iv. Details of any Duty to Co-operate issues and meetings that have arisen or been undertaken.

- 4.4 Monitoring of planning policies enable the Council to establish if the Local Plan, either as a whole, or in part, is effective. The longer the Plan has been implemented the clearer this becomes.
- 4.5 The AMR is not intended as a state of the Council report and should not be read as such. It is specifically monitoring the impacts of new development in the borough, providing an important evidence base that will help to inform Council and planning decisions across the Plan period, as well as informing when a future review of the Local Plan will be necessary.
- 4.6 This year's AMR is monitoring new policies that include new policy requirements to be met, many of which have not been monitored in the borough before. The Policy team has made every effort to collect and include as much data as possible but there are some gaps in the report where it has not been possible to source data this year. This may reflect factors such as: new policy requirements that have not been monitored previously; external reports not being completed in time. For indicators where there this applies, the team has sought to put in place a methodology that should enable the data to be collected and reported on in subsequent years.
- 4.7. It should also be noted that all of the applications referenced in this report and contributing to the data that has been recorded this year, were approved prior to the adoption of the new Watford Local Plan and the policies within it being given full weight in decision making.
- 4.8 One of the key intentions of an AMR is allowing comparisons to be made between monitoring years. This will show trends that can help assess the effectiveness of adopted policies. For some indicators that were similarly monitored in the old AMR, related to the superseded Core Strategy, this has been possible, but for new indicators that have not previously been monitored, this first year will act as a baseline against which subsequent years will be assessed.
- 4.9 It is therefore expected, and unavoidable, that the next two or three AMRs will be fairly transitional as applications approved against superseded policies

get delivered and replaced by applications approved against the new Local Plan policies, and the process for monitoring the different indicators develops.

4.10 There is no requirement to consult on an AMR, it is published on the Council's website as an information document.

4.11 The below lists some of the key headline data from this year's AMR:

- 754 net residential completions compared to an annual target of 784 residential completions; 49% of these were within the Core Development Area.
- 95% of new residential development was on Previously Developed Land compared to a target of 80%.
- 90% of new residential units were flats, apartments or maisonettes.
- 10% of new residential units were 3+ bedrooms (family sized) compared to the new Local Plan target of 20%.
- 251 net affordable dwellings comprising: 75% affordable rent; 10% social rent; 15% intermediate/shared ownership. This equates to 33% of all residential completions compared to a target of 35%.
- 15,507sqm of net additional office floorspace, but there have been net losses recorded in other types of employment floorspace both inside and outside the designated industrial areas. The target is for there to be no net loss of employment floorspace. Paragraph 4.12 provides some additional context relating to the reported loss of employment floorspace.
- Net growth of more than 20,000sqm of office floorspace within the Clarendon Road Primary Office Location.
- 711sqm net additional retail floorspace in the town centre.
- £1.36 million secured through CIL/s106 payments.
- 129 additional electric vehicle spaces delivered.

4.12 The AMR reports a net loss in employment floorspace over the monitoring year for all employment uses other than offices. It is important to recognise, however, that over 3,500sqm of the reported loss was on a single site where the existing employment uses have been demolished over the monitoring year, but where this floorspace will be replaced at a later date and will provide a net gain of more than 2500sqm of employment floorspace. Whilst it is acknowledged that there has been a reported net loss this year, the scale of loss in the short to medium term may not be as significant as it may first appear. The loss of employment floorspace has been a long standing issue in the borough and the new Local Plan should give the Council greater ability to resist inappropriate proposals.

## 5.0 Implications

### 5.1 Financial

5.1.1 The Shared Director of Finance comments that the development of residential and business accommodation will have an impact on the resources available to the Council, through Council Tax and Business Rates, and the services that the Council delivers. However, there are no financial implications arising directly from this report.

### 5.2 Legal Issues (Monitoring Officer)

5.2.1 The Group Head of Democracy and Governance comments that all legal implications are referenced and dealt with in the main body of the 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 there are no direct equalities impacts arising from this report. The application of existing policies will be covered by existing equalities assessments and the review and preparation of new policies will be subject to assessments at the appropriate time.

5.3.3 There are no Human Rights impacts associated with this report.

5.3.4 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 AMR has been, and will continue to be, produced within the existing resources in the planning policy team.

### 5.5 Accommodation

5.5.1 N/A

### 5.6 Community Safety/Crime and Disorder

5.6.1 N/A

### 5.7 Sustainability

5.7.1 N/A



## 6.0 **Appendices**

6.1 Appendix 1: Watford Authority Monitoring Report 2021-2022

## 7.0 **Background papers**

7.1 No papers were used in the preparation of this report.

# Watford Authorities Monitoring Report: 2021-2022

March 2023

# Executive Summary

Monitoring Indicator	Relevant Watford Local Plan policy	Policy target	Previous Monitoring Year (MY)	Current MY	Target met in current Monitoring Year? Yes or NO	Current trend- Red Amber Green
Residential completions	Policy H03.1	784 dwellings per annum (dpa) completed, 13,328 over the plan period, maintain a 5 year supply	395 dwellings (dws)	754 (Net) dws	N	
Residential delivery within the Core Development Area	CDA2.1; CDA 2.2 and CDA 2.3	No specific target set	-	368 dws (49%)	-	-
Residential delivery within the Watford Gateway Strategic Development Area	CDA 2.1	No specific target set	-	171 dws (23%)	-	-
Residential delivery within the Town Centre Strategic Development Area	CDA 2.2	No specific target set	-	104 dws (14%)	-	-
Residential delivery within the Colne Valley Strategic Development Area	CDA 2.3	No specific target set	-	93 dws (12%)	-	-
Residential delivery on PDL	Policy SS1.1	80% of all residential development	63%	95%	Y	
Number of dwellings granted permission	Policy H03.1	784 dpa completed, 13,328 over the plan period, maintain a 5 year supply	-	991 dws	Y	
Lapse Rate	Policy H03.1	Keep lapse rate as low as possible	-	6%	Y	
Density of new residential development within the Core Development Area (dph)	Policy H03.2	Minimum target of 95 dwellings per hectare (dph) within the CDA	-	177dph	Y	
Density of new residential development outside the Core Development Area (dph)	Policy H03.2	Minimum target of 45 dwellings per hectare outside the CDA.	-	95dph	Y	
Size of dwellings completed	Policy H03.2	20% of all completions to be family sized	-	10%	N	
Affordable housing delivery	Policy H03.3	35% of all habitable rooms on sites of 10 or more	75 dws	251 dws	Y	

	Policy H03.4	dwellings to be affordable.					
Number of applications for residential conversions permitted?	Policy H03.9	No specific target set	-	14 dws	-	-	
Number of specialist and care bed spaces completed	Policy H03.5	102 bed spaces over the plan period (6 bed spaces per year).	-	0	N		
Number of student bed spaces	Policy H03.6	No specific target set.	-	0	-	-	
Number of Gypsy and Traveller pitches granted planning permission.	Policy H03.8	Meet the identified need for two pitches over the plan period.	0	0	N		
Number of self build or custom build plots provided and completed.	Policy H03.7	Proposals for 20 houses or more to provide plots to contribute towards meeting the needs of people on the self build and customhouse building list	-	0	-		
Building standards for new homes	Policy H03.10	All new homes to comply with M4(2) accessibility standard.		<i>No data available</i>	<i>n/a</i>		
		6% of all new dwellings to meet M4(3) accessibility standard.		<i>No data available</i>	<i>n/a</i>		
		2% all dwellings on developments of 50 or more dwellings to be dementia friendly.		<i>No data available</i>	<i>n/a</i>		
Net Industrial floorspace	Policy SS1.1 Policy EM4.2	No net loss of industrial floorspace	-	-5,143sqm	N		
Net Office floorspace	Policy EM4.3	No net loss of E(g)(i) class office floorspace	-	15,507sqm	Y		
Net delivery of employment floorspace within the designated industrial areas	Policy EM4.2	No net loss of industrial floorspace within the designated industrial areas	-	-4,863qm	N		
Net delivery of E(g)(i) office floorspace within the Primary	Policy EM4.2	No net loss of office floorspace within the Primary	-	15,235sqm	Y		

Office Location and the Town Centre		Office Location or the Town Centre				
Delivery of employment floorspace outside designated employment locations	Policy EM4.4	No net loss of floorspace	-	242sqm	Y	
Employment land available on extant permissions	Policy EM4.1	No specific target set	-	43,514sqm	-	-
Net delivery of retail E(a) floorspace over the monitoring year	Policy VT5.1	No specific target set	-	Town Centre: 711sqm	-	-
				District Centre: 0 sqm		
				Local Centres: -163sqm		
Net delivery of main town centre uses over the monitoring year	Policy VT5.1	No specific target set	-	Town Centre: -3748sqm	-	-
				District Centre: 0sqm		
				Local Centres: -163sqm		
Percentage of designated centres which are in main town centre uses	Policy VT5.1	No specific target set		<i>No data available</i>	<i>n/a</i>	
Vacancy rate in the designated centres	Policy VT5.1	No specific target set		<i>No data available</i>	<i>n/a</i>	
Number of planning applications where Policies QD6.2; or QD6.4 is listed as a reason for refusal	Policy QD6.2 QD6.4	No specific target set		<i>No data available</i>	<i>n/a</i>	
Number of planning applications where Policies QD6.3 is listed as a reason for refusal	Policy QD6.3	No specific target set		<i>No data available</i>	<i>n/a</i>	
Number of applications completed over the MY that exceed the base building heights	Policy QD6.5	No specific target set	-	3	-	-
Number of extant permissions that will exceed the base building heights	Policy QD6.5	No specific target set	-	11	-	-
Number of developments granted planning permission	Policy QD6.5	No specific target set	-	2	-	-

over the monitoring year that exceeded the base building heights						
Number of applications refused over the monitoring year where Policy QD6.5 (Building Height) is listed as a reason for refusal	Policy QD6.5	No specific target set		<i>No data available</i>	<i>n/a</i>	
Number of assets on the heritage at risk register	Policy HE7.2	Reduce the number of buildings on the heritage at risk register.	-	6 (2 assets removed from register over the monitoring year)	Y	
Number of applications granted contrary to advice from Historic England	Policy HE7.2	No specific target set		<i>No data available</i>	<i>n/a</i>	
Percentage of carbon reduction since 2018	Policy CC8.1	Reduction in carbon emissions over the plan period	-	11.7%	Y	
Percentage of non-residential developments which meet BREEAM standards	Policy CC8.2	100% of developments meeting either excellent or very good		<i>No data available</i>	<i>n/a</i>	
Number of new residential permissions that meet carbon emission standards	Policy CC8.1	19% energy efficiency above Part L of the Building Regulations.		<i>No data available</i>	<i>n/a</i>	
Number of new homes achieving 110 litres/person/day	Policy CC8.3	100% of new homes		<i>No data available</i>	<i>n/a</i>	
Number of Air Quality Management Areas	Policy CC8.4	Reduce the number of Air Quality Management Areas	2	2	-	
Number of planning applications refused on pollution grounds	Policy CC8.5	Zero refusals		<i>No data available</i>	<i>n/a</i>	
Number of Environment Agency objections to planning applications.	Policy NE9.3 Policy NE9.4 Policy NE9.5	No planning permissions granted contrary to the advice of the Environment Agency on flooding and water quality grounds.	0	0	Y	

Net gain/loss of designated open space	Policy NE9.6 Policy NE9.7	No net loss of designated open space	614 hectares	0 losses	Y	
Net gain in Biodiversity	Policy NE9.8	10% net gain		<i>No data available</i>	<i>n/a</i>	
Delivery of Infrastructure	Policy IN10.1 Policy IN10.2	Deliver the infrastructure set out in the Infrastructure Delivery Plan	-	IDP reference 7.4 (Colne Valley Linear Park) and 7.1 (Transforming travel in Watford)	Y	
Developer contributions paid	Policy IN10.3	No specific target set	£3,029,271	£1,203,484 (CIL)  £154,541.98 (s106)	-	-
% of new housing within 400m of a bus stop/railway station	Policy ST11.1	No specific target set	-	Bus stop- 100%  Railway station- 29%	-	-
% of developments granted with policy compliant cycle parking provision	Policy ST11.4	100%		<i>No data available</i>	<i>n/a</i>	
% of people walking and cycling for their main mode of transport	Policy ST11.4	Improvement on baseline levels	-	32% walking	-	
				3.7 % cycling		
% of electric vehicles within the boroughs total car ownership	Policy ST11.5	Improvement on baseline levels	1,289 additional electric vehicle registrations	2,125 additional electric vehicle registrations	Y	
Number of electric vehicle spaces delivered	Policy ST11.5	No specific target set	-	129 spaces provided	-	-
Level of car ownership in the borough	Policy ST11.5	Improvement on baseline levels	-	68% (2011 census)	-	
% of new developments which have an active travel plan	Policy ST11.6	Improvement on baseline levels		<i>No data available</i>	<i>n/a</i>	
Number of qualifying schemes with a Health Impact Assessment completed	Policy HC12.2	All schemes over 100 dwellings		<i>No data available</i>	<i>n/a</i>	
Number of new community facilities approved/completed	Policy HC12.3	No specific target set	-	None	-	-

Number of community facilities lost over the monitoring year	Policy HC12.3	No net loss	-	0 losses	Y	
Number of housing allocations permitted, started or completed over the monitoring year	Policy SA13.1	8,604 dwellings over the plan period	-	2 permitted 2 under construction	-	
Number of mixed use allocations permitted, started or completed over the monitoring year	Policy SA13.1	8,604 dwellings over the plan period	-	2 permitted 2 under construction	-	
Number of employment allocations permitted, started or completed over the monitoring year	Policy SA13.1	12,799sqm of industrial floorspace over the plan period 19,428sqm of office floorspace over the plan period	-	2 permitted 1 under construction	-	
Number of education site allocations permitted, started or completed over the monitoring year	Policy SA13.1	No specific target	-	0 permitted	-	-



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# 1. Introduction

Section 113 of the Localism Act (2011) requires every Local Planning Authority (LPA) to publish monitoring information at least annually<sup>1</sup>. In the past Watford has complied with this requirement by producing an Authority Monitoring Report (AMR).

The structure and content of an AMR is not fully prescribed in legislation and it is largely up to each LPA to decide what is included.

The report must however be consistent with regulation 34 of the Town and Country Planning (Local Development) (England) Regulations 2012. These regulations set out the following minimum requirements for what monitoring information must be published:

- A Local Development Scheme;
- The boroughs performance against the housing delivery targets in the development plan;
- Any Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) payments the authority has received;
- Details of any Duty to Co-operate issues and meetings that have arisen or been undertaken.

Watford's AMR previously monitored progress against policies in the Core Strategy 2006 – 2031, adopted in 2013, and the remaining saved policies of the Watford District Plan, adopted in 2000. These documents are now redundant having been superseded by the Watford Local Plan 2021 – 2038, which was adopted in October 2022. As such, this AMR is monitoring performance against the policies in the new Watford Local Plan 2021 – 2038 even though the Plan was formally adopted after the 2021-2022 monitoring year had ended. This is to ensure that the monitoring of the Plan reflects the start of the plan period being 2021.

Following adoption of the Watford Local Plan, the borough's development plan now consists of:

- Watford Local Plan 2021-2038
- The Waste Core Strategy and Development Management policies 2011-2026 within the Minerals and Waste Local Plan, prepared by Hertfordshire County Council.

It is these documents which are used, alongside any relevant supplementary documents, and any other material considerations, to determine planning applications.

The new Local Plan incorporates the following key objectives for future growth in the borough within its overarching vision:

- Watford will be an exemplar town that embraces sustainability and the challenges of climate change.
- Achieve a high quality of design on new developments and ensure that they are accessible and inclusive.
- Conserve and enhance green and blue infrastructure, maximising biodiversity.
- The town centre will retain its role as a retail destination in the sub-region.
- Watford will have a comprehensive network of cycling and walking routes, plus public transport will be enhanced to encourage a move away from car usage.
- Protect and enhance Watford's social, cultural, built environment and heritage.

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<sup>1</sup> [Plan-making - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/plan-making)- para 073

- Support the local economy through creating business opportunities and providing a mix of employment spaces to support growth.
- Support growth with high quality infrastructure.

The above vision has been reflected in the Plan's policies. Monitoring these policies will help the Council to reflect on the extent to which this vision is being realised and whether further interventions such as revised or new policies are needed in the future.

As was the case in previous AMRs, this document goes significantly beyond the minimum requirements of regulation 34 and monitors a wide variety of indicators that cross economic, social and environmental topics.

The Local Plan includes a monitoring framework (Appendix A) which sets out what indicators will be monitored, how it will be monitored and what targets the Council is seeking to achieve over the Plan period. Some of these targets are more prescriptive than others, and some indicators do not have a specific target where applying one would not be appropriate. This AMR aligns closely with this monitoring framework and reports on the majority of policies in the Plan.

This report covers the period **1 April 2021 to 31 March 2022**.

This is the first year of using this new format of AMR and of monitoring policies from the new Local Plan. Whilst the Council has made every effort to collect as much data as possible, there are some gaps where data has not available in this first monitoring year. It is the intention that future AMRs will develop so that they can monitor every indicator effectively, and the policy team have already put in place procedures that will enable the team to collect additional data in future years.

An important part of ensuring that the AMR is useful in considering the impacts of the Local Plan policies is using it to monitor trends by comparing the monitoring year results with previous years. Whilst this has been possible for some indicators, there are lots of topics which the borough has not collected data on before and so comparisons are not possible in this first year. Where this is the case, this year's data will be used as a baseline against which future years will be compared.

It should also be noted that all of the applications referenced in this report and contributing to the data that has been recorded, were approved prior to the adoption of the new Watford Local Plan and the policies within it being given full weight in decision making.

The Council welcomes views on the new Authority Monitoring Report's format and content so improvements to future reports can be made. If there are any comments then please send these to [strategy@watford.gov.uk](mailto:strategy@watford.gov.uk).

Please note that every effort has been made to ensure the accuracy of the data provided. However, in the event of any honest errors noticed please also send these to [strategy@watford.gov.uk](mailto:strategy@watford.gov.uk).

### Why do we have an AMR?

Councils have a duty to monitor the effectiveness of their planning policies. The AMR is not intended as a state of the Council report and should not be read as such, it is instead an important evidence base that will help to inform Council and planning decisions across the Plan period, and will inform any future review of the Local Plan. It is likely that actual progress and trends on some of the new policy requirements may take some years to emerge fully which will be important to recognise when considering the effectiveness of policies in the Plan.

The AMR allows the Council to;

- Establish what new development and change has occurred in the borough and monitor trends.
- Consider the extent to which Local Plan policies are effective and successful (or where there may be problems).
- Decide whether changes to policies or targets are necessary and whether these are significant enough to prompt a full or partial review to the Local Plan.

### How to use this document

The AMR is structured roughly in plan order and divided into chapters using sub-headings that reflect sections in the new Local Plan. The majority of indicators correspond directly to a row in the Watford Local Plan monitoring framework.

An executive summary is provided at the start of the document setting out the annual results and giving a basic indication of whether targets are being met, and whether the trend is up, down or unchanged from the previous year.

As this is the first year of the new plan period, much of this year's data is being presented as a baseline against which future years will be measured. It is likely that the next two or three AMRs will also be fairly transitional as applications approved against superseded policies get delivered and replaced by applications approved against the new Local Plan policies.

The majority of indicators are reported in tables that will provide data from 2021/2022 to 2025/2026. This will enable comparisons to be clearly shown and enable more streamlined updating of the indicators in future years. After 2025/2026, a column titled 'Pre-2026' will be added to include the cumulative total of completions prior to this date. This will keep the table legible and compact.

For each indicator three analysis boxes are provided, one describing what has happened over the monitoring year, one to analyse comparisons and trends with previous years and finally a section which will explain the impacts of the years data on the Local Plan and the effectiveness of the Plan's policies.

The following sub sections summarise the different sections of this AMR and the key indicators that are to be monitored.

### A Spatial Strategy for Watford

This section of the Plan sets out the overall strategy for growth in the borough including the number of residential dwellings, and level of employment floorspace that is required to meet local needs and broadly where this growth will be located within the borough.

This AMR reports the number of residential completions over the monitoring year, and the net gain/loss of employment floorspace and will offer comparisons with identified needs in the borough.

## The Core Development Area

The vast majority of development in the borough is to be directed towards three Strategic Development Areas as the most sustainable locations for growth.

- The Watford Gateway Strategic Development Area;
- The Town Centre Strategic Development Area; and
- The Colne Valley Strategic Development Area.

This area is known collectively as the Core Development Area (CDA). 80% of all residential and mixed use allocations in the Plan are situated within the CDA.

This AMR will report the number of residential completions taking place within and outside the Core Development Area and within each of the three Strategic Development Areas individually. This will help to show where new development in the borough is being concentrated.

## Homes for a Growing Community

The Local Plan aims to provide the housing that the community needs and ensure that these homes are well designed, high quality and that they meet building standards.

This AMR will report on the delivery of market housing, specialist housing, including affordable housing, and the quality of new residential development relative to required access and space standards.

## A Strong Economy

The Local Plan aims to support the delivery of new, and the protection of existing, office and industrial employment floorspace. Clarendon Road, along with the town centre, will be the focus for new E(g)(i) office uses; whilst there are several designated industrial areas that will be the focus for the majority of industrial E(g)(iii)/B2/B8 floorspace.

This AMR will report on the delivery of both industrial and office uses, both within designated employment areas and outside.

## A Vibrant Town

The policies in the Plan seek to support the Town Centre, District Centre and Local Centres in challenging economic times following the Covid-19 pandemic by protecting their long term vitality and viability. Policies provide flexibility to encourage a mix of uses within the town centre whilst ensuring that it remains a focus for main town centre uses as defined in the NPPF.

This AMR will report on the net delivery of retail and main town centre uses floorspace over the monitoring year and will report the results of a town centre survey conducted by Hertfordshire County Council to determine the proportion of the centres that are in an active town centre uses and the proportion of units that are currently vacant.

These indicators will allow assessment of the health of the Centres, and changing demands as peoples shopping habits change.

## An Attractive Town

Achieving a high quality of design is a key objective for the borough and the policies in the Plan require applicants to demonstrate how they have designed schemes in a way that reflects the character of the area, the National Planning Policy Framework, the National Design Guide and any Supplementary Planning Documents.

The Plan also includes a policy on building heights which is a locally important issue, setting base building heights for each part of the borough as well as a detailed set of criteria that a proposal must adhere to in order for it to be acceptable.

The new AMR is the first time that design is being specifically monitored in Watford. The document will report; the number of planning applications where poor design has been listed as a reason for refusal, and the number of applications approved that exceed the base building heights, and conversely the number of applications where the building heights policy, Policy QD6.5 has been listed as a reason for refusal.

## The Historic Environment

Policies in the Plan seek to preserve and enhance both nationally and locally designated heritage assets and conservation areas, ensuring that new development compliments the boroughs historic environment.

This AMR will report on the number of buildings in Watford that are considered to be 'at risk' both on the Historic England 'heritage at risk' register which is released annually, and the Council's own list. The report will also monitor the number of applications which were granted contrary to advice from Historic England, and any works or changes to listed buildings that have taken place over the monitoring year.

## A Climate Emergency

Policies in the Plan aim to move the borough towards a more carbon neutral future and ensure that the borough adapts to and mitigates the effects of climate change, reflecting the Council's declaration of a Climate Emergency in 2019. Policies also seek to ensure that development does not have an unacceptable impact on a variety of pollution related issues such as noise, odour, air quality or light pollution

This AMR will monitor progress in reducing carbon emissions, pollution, and improving air quality across the borough. It will also monitor the proportion of new developments that meet sustainability standards regarding BREEAM, water and energy efficiency.

## Conserving and Enhancing the Environment

The Local Plan seeks to protect, enhance and increase biodiversity, and access to open space and green and blue infrastructure. The Plan recognises the importance of these spaces to the local community and their role in helping to mitigate the impacts of climate change.

This section of the AMR will report on the number of applications that have been approved contrary to advice from the Environment Agency, the net gain/loss of open space and green infrastructure and the proportion of approved planning applications that have resulted in a net gain in biodiversity.



## Infrastructure

The full infrastructure requirements for the Plan are set out in an Infrastructure Delivery Plan (IDP) which was submitted as part of the Local Plan evidence base and remains a live document that will be updated over the plan period. Much of the funding for this infrastructure will be sought from developer contributions as part of new development.

This AMR will therefore report on progress with the delivery of infrastructure in the IDP, and on the receipt and spending of developer contributions in the borough.

## A Sustainable Travel Town

The Local Plan seeks to achieve a modal shift over the plan period, away from private cars towards more active travel and better, more convenient and accessible, public transport.

There are a variety of indicators relating to this objective within this AMR, including the proportion of new developments that are located within 400m of a bus stop and railway station, and the proportion of new developments that include policy compliant car and cycle parking provision.

There is also an indicator relating to the provision of electric vehicle charging points and the level of electronic vehicle ownership compared to diesel or petrol vehicles.

There is also a broader indicator relating to the percentage of residents that walk or cycle as their main method of transport.

## A Healthy Community

The Plan has a chapter on health, reflecting the importance of getting people to be more active by walking and cycling more through the improved provision of cycle ways and greenspaces, healthy eating, tackling noise and air pollution and providing for a healthy older population and protecting and supporting community facilities.

This AMR will report on the number of approved planning applications that include a Health Impact Assessment (HIA), and the net delivery of new community facilities.

## Site Allocations and new development

There are four types of site allocation in the Plan, thirty three are purely residential (28 of them are under 1 ha in size), alongside twenty three mixed use allocations which together provide for 8,604 residential units alongside a variety of other uses including employment, education or retail.

There are employment allocations providing for office and industrial floorspace.

There is one Gypsy and Traveller allocation for two pitches.

There are two sites allocated for education facility development over the plan period.

All allocated sites have development considerations which are used to highlight the specific requirements of development proposals and any potential issues or special considerations that need to be taken into account in delivering them.

The AMR will report generally on housing and employment delivery across the borough but it will also specifically report updates on allocated sites.

## Duty to Co-operate

The Duty to Co-operate is a statutory duty that all LPAs must adhere to, requiring co-operation (though not necessarily agreement), on cross boundary issues that arise between neighbouring plan making authorities, and other statutory bodies, when developing strategic policies.

During the preparation of their respective Local Plans, Dacorum Borough Council, Hertsmere Borough Council, St Albans City and District Council, Three Rivers District Council, Hertfordshire County Council and Watford Borough Council have been working collaboratively to identify and consider how to appropriately address cross boundary issues where they exist.

These six Councils have also been working together on the South West Herts Joint Strategic Plan, which was subject to an initial vision consultation soon after the end of the 2021/2022 monitoring year.

Before submission of the Local Plan in 2021, Watford Borough Council signed Statements of Common Ground with all of these Councils. Following the adoption of Watford's Local Plan, further cross boundary work and discussions will be ongoing as these Council's progress their own Local Plans, and with the County Council on the production of the Local Transport Plan.

At the Hertfordshire County wide level, Watford has played an active role in the Hertfordshire Infrastructure and Planning Partnership, the Hertfordshire Planning Group and the Hertfordshire Development Plans Group. The work of these groups is helping to progress a number of joined up strategies on infrastructure needs, development viability and agreeing future joint working arrangements.

There were no Duty to Co-operate issues raised by the Planning Inspector or any other stakeholder during the examination of the Local Plan, nor during the subsequent consultation on main modifications, adoption or legal challenge period. This reflects and endorses the collaborative approach taken to cross boundary issues in Watford, and the positive engagement that was undertaken at all stages of the Local Plan process.

Over the monitoring year, a variety of Duty to Co-operate meetings were attended by officers in the Planning Policy team. These included meetings with neighbouring Councils in South West Hertfordshire in relation to Local Plan progress and minerals and waste issues led by Hertfordshire County Council.

This section of the AMR will record any key Duty to Co-operate issues that have arisen over each monitoring year.

## Local Development Scheme

The timetable setting out the programme for production of Local Plan Documents is known as the Local Development Scheme (LDS). AMRs are required to set out the latest progress with preparing local plan documents during the monitoring year to meet targets set in the LDS, and whether changes to the LDS are required.

Following the recent adoption of the Local Plan there is currently no new LDS or any timetable in place to undertake a review. Once a decision is formally made to review the Local Plan a new LDS will be published in this section of future AMRs.

## Watford Local Plan 2021-2038

The Watford Local Plan 2021-2038 was adopted at the Full Council meeting on 17<sup>th</sup> October 2022. Paragraph 33 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) requires that local plans are reviewed every five years (from the date of local plan adoption) to consider whether they need updating. Any review will take into account changing circumstances affecting the area and any changes in national policy guidance.

## Supplementary Planning Guidance

Following the adoption of the Local Plan, the Council is intending to prepare a series of Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs).

Over the plan period this section will provide written updates on progress with SPDs and any other supplementary planning guidance that is being produced.

Table 1: Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs) being prepared by the Council

Name of document	Progress over the monitoring year
Affordable Housing SPD	Preliminary scoping and internal discussions have been undertaken and further progress will be made over the next monitoring year
Colne Valley Strategic Development Area SPD	The Council committed to doing an SPD during the Local Plan hearing sessions. Initial internal discussions are taking place.
Biodiversity SPD	Currently awaiting a template that has been developed by Hertfordshire County Council and the Hertfordshire and Middlesex Wildlife Team.
Design SPD	Broad scoping has begun and a project team has been assembled to take this forward

## Neighbourhood Plans and Neighbourhood/Local Development Orders

The borough currently has no Neighbourhood Plans in place, or in production. There are no Neighbourhood Plan groups currently active. This section will record any changes to this situation over the plan period.

## 2. Housing

### Plan Period and Housing Targets

The Watford Local Plan sets a minimum target of 13,328 homes to be delivered over the plan period between 2021 and 2038, an average delivery rate of 784 dwellings per annum. This target reflects the Government’s standard methodology figure for calculating local authority housing needs in Watford.

The Plan makes provision for this scale of growth through a combination of residential and mixed use site allocations, windfall completions and the implementation of current extant commitments.

Figure 3.1 of the Local Plan (replicated below in Figure 1) shows the breakdown of how the housing target will be met in the borough over the Plan period.

Figure 1- Housing supply identified in the Watford Local Plan- 2021-2038

### Housing Trajectory

The housing trajectory assesses actual net annual completions in the past and projected numbers of completions in the future compared to the Plan’s target for new housing growth.

The main purpose of the trajectory is to support forward planning by monitoring housing performance and supply to determine if any action is necessary or any amendments to planning policy are required to meet targets.

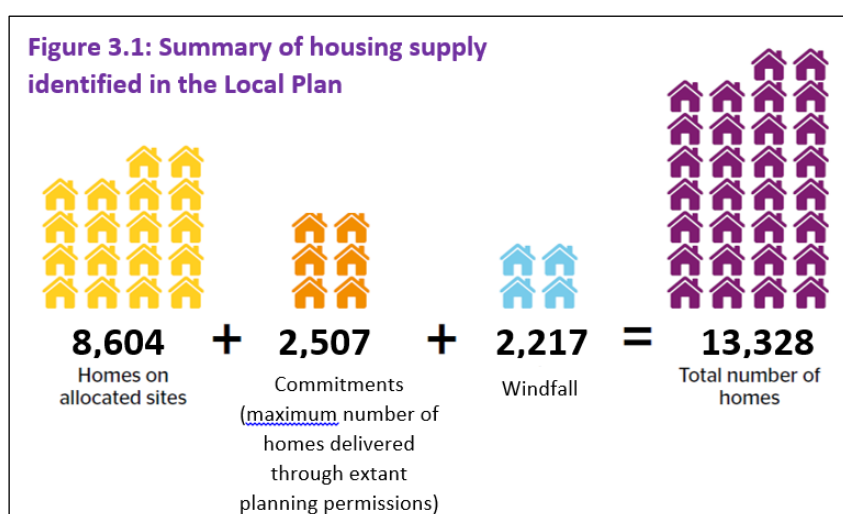
As this is a new Plan period with new housing targets, this year’s data will act as the baseline against which future years housing delivery will be assessed.

For some additional context however, since 2015/2016 there has been an average of 312 residential completions per annum with a maximum annual delivery of 416 dwellings in 2020/2021. This provides a useful historic context when looking at the following tables. More detail on past housing completions can be found in previously published AMRs.

Table 2 sets out the gross and net residential completions over the monitoring year.

Table 2: Residential completions over the monitoring year (MY) (dwellings)

	2021/2022	2022/2023	2023/2024	2024/2025	2025/2026	Total
Gross residential completions MY	812					
Net residential completions MY	754					



### **What Happened?:**

In total there were 754 net residential completions over the monitoring year April 1<sup>st</sup> 2021 to March 31<sup>st</sup> 2022. This represents a slight shortfall on the Local Plan annual housing target of 784 dwellings of 30 dwellings.

The bulk of housing delivery was on the following large sites although there was substantial delivery on smaller sites as well:

Land to the East of Ascot Road (18/00703)- 171 completions

149 St Albans Road (18/00542)- 106 completions

Former Gas Holder (18/01560)- 92 completions

16-18 St Albans Road (19/00999)- 90 completions

### **Comparisons:**

Whilst the annual housing target was narrowly missed, the figure of 754 represents the largest single year of completions in the borough since the previous AMR was first published in 2006/2007. The previous highest number of completions in a single year was 633 in 2010/2011. 754 is significantly higher than the average since 2015/16 which has been 312 completions per annum.

It will be interesting to see how housing delivery fluctuates going forward over the plan period, and this indicator will compare delivery year on year as well as looking at trends over a longer period of time.

### **Implications of the Local Plan:**

The delivery of 754 net additional dwellings represents a substantial increase in the delivery of new dwellings relative to historic trends of just over 312 dwellings per annum.

This year, residential dwellings have mainly been delivered on large capacity flatted sites of over 100 dwellings which tend to contribute towards a peak and trough style of housing delivery due to them delivering large numbers of dwellings in one year and low numbers in other years. It would be expected that delivery will peak and trough over the next 2-3 years before becoming more consistent once the mainly small to medium sized site allocations start to come forward.

## [Housing Delivery Test](#)

The Housing Delivery Test was introduced by the Government in 2018 to monitor how effectively new homes are being delivered within local authorities over a three year period. The test is based on comparing the standard methodology produced by Government against the actual number of homes delivered over a rolling three year period.

The following table shows the latest Housing Delivery Test result in Watford for the period up to 2021. A revised Housing Delivery Test is expected from the Government up to 2022, but this has not been published at the time of publication. The results of this update will be reported by the Council once known, and will be reported subsequently in next year's AMR for reference.

Table 3: Housing Delivery Test results (dwellings)

Number of homes required			Total number of homes required	Number of homes delivered			Total number of homes delivered	Housing Delivery Test: 2021 measurement	Housing Delivery Test: 2021 consequence
2018-19	2019-20	2020-21		2018-19	2019-20	2020-21			
798	726	524	2,048	298	266	416	980	48%	Presumption

#### What Happened?:

The Council has failed to meet the Housing Delivery Test requirements due to under delivering relative to needs.

As a result of this the council is subject to all of the following:

- Less than 95%- An action plan must be produced within six months.
- Less than 85%- A 20% buffer must be added to the five year housing land supply
- Less than 75%- The 'presumption in favour of sustainable development' applies. This introduces a test, which has become known in legal cases as the 'tilted balance' in favour of granting permission for housing development. This means that local development plan policies carry less weight and increased emphasis should be placed on the NPPF in decision making.

As a result of this, a 20% buffer has been added to the borough's five year housing supply and the Council has produced an Action Plan which can be viewed on the Council's website.

#### Comparisons:

There has been no change to the overall Housing Delivery Test results since the previous 2020 results were published. Given this years significantly increased housing delivery, it will be interesting to see how this translates into the 2022 Housing Delivery Test results expected in the new year. These results will be published by the Council once available.

## Implications for the Local Plan:

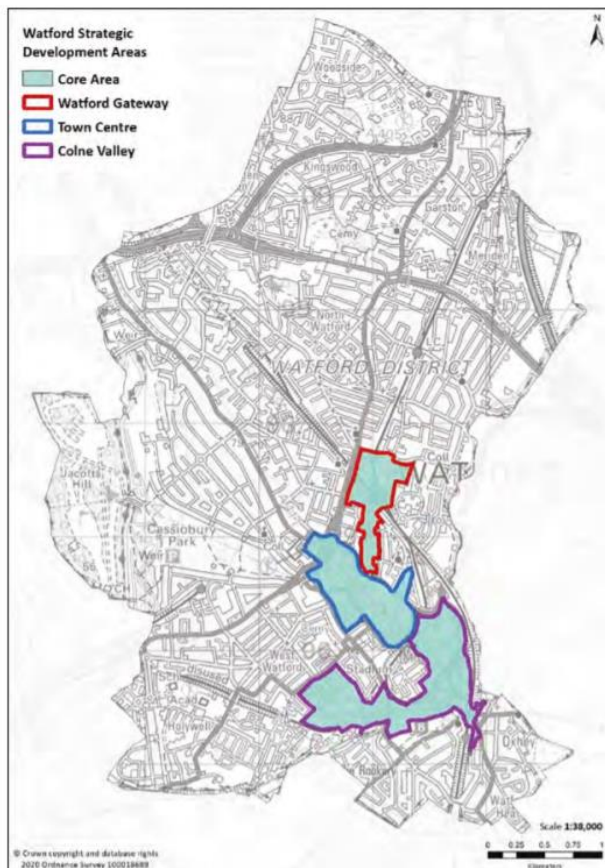
It is likely, despite the increased delivery of housing this year, that the Council will remain in the 'less than 75%' category of the Housing Delivery Test, and as a result still be in the 'Presumption in favour of sustainable development' when the new 2022 results are published.

The allocation of housing and mixed use development sites in the Local Plan should help the Council to improve its position relative to the Housing Delivery Test and ensure the Council maintains a Five Year Housing supply position.

## Five Year Housing Supply

The Five Year Housing Supply Statement is published separately from this report.

## 2021-2022 Housing Completions



This section breaks down the current monitoring years residential completions by location and type.

The Core Development Area (CDA) includes the area covered by the three Strategic Development Areas (SDAs); Town Centre SDA, Colne Valley SDA and Watford Gateway SDA. Figure 2 shows the geographic extent of the CDA and each of the SDAs. 80% of dwellings proposed on site allocations are located within the CDA and it is expected that a similarly high percentage of all completions over the plan period will be located within this area.

Figure 2- Core Development Area and Strategic Development Areas

Tables 4 and 5 below, break down annual residential completions into those within the CDA as a whole and then into each of the three SDAs.

Table 4: Net residential completions within the Core Development Area (dwellings)

		2021/2022	2022/2023	2023/2024	2024/2025	2025/2026	Total
Net residential completions within CDA	No.	368					
	%	49%					
Net residential completions outside CDA	No.	386					
	%	51%					

Table 5: Residential completions by Strategic Development Area (dwellings)

		2021/2022	2022/2023	2023/2024	2024/2025	2025/2026	Total
Net residential completions within Watford Gateway SDA	No.	171					
	% of total HC's	23%					
Net residential completions within the Town Centre SDA	No.	104					
	% of total HC's	14%					
Net residential completions within the Colne Valley SDA	No.	93					
	% of total HC's	12%					

### What Happened?:

Over the current monitoring year there were 368 net residential completions within the CDA out of a total of 754 completions. This equates to 49% of all completions.

The Watford Gateway SDA saw the highest number of residential completions over the monitoring year (171 dwellings- 23% of all completions). These were all on a single development site on Land to the East of Ascot Road (18/00703).

104 completions (14% of total completions) were within the Town Centre SDA however in contrast with the Watford Gateway SDA this was spread across 13 small development sites, only two of which were major developments of more than 10 dwellings.

93 completions (12% of total completions) were within the Colne Valley SDA across two development sites at Lower High Street and Riverwell.



### Comparisons:

As this is the first year of the new monitoring framework, and of the new Watford Local Plan, it is impossible to make comparisons for this indicator. This year will be used as a benchmark against which future AMRs will be compared.

### Implications for the Local Plan:

The Plan directs the majority of growth to the Core Development Area reflecting its sustainability in terms of access to services and facilities and public transport and therefore its suitability for development. 80% of all residential and mixed use site allocations are within the CDA and so it is likely that delivery in this area will increase, and that the proportion of delivery relative to outside the CDA will also increase as these site allocations come forward.

This is the first year that the CDA designation has been in place and so it hard to make any long term conclusions on its effectiveness as a designation at this stage.

## Residential Completions on Previously Developed Land (PDL)

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and the Local Plan seek to make effective use of land by optimising densities and prioritising the re-use of brownfield sites (Previously Developed Land). There is a target in the monitoring framework for 80% of all residential development to be on Previously Developed Land (PDL).

The proportion of completions on PDL has historically been high in Watford, 84% on average over the five years prior to the start of the plan period (2015-2020) and it is expected that this trend will continue given the geography of the borough and the focus in the Local Plan on delivering growth on brownfield sites.

Table 6: Residential completions on Previously Developed Land (Gross) (dwellings)

		2021/2022	2022/2023	2023/2024	2024/2025	2025/2026	Total
Residential completions on PDL (gross)	No.	767					
	%	95%					

### What Happened?:

In 2021/2022 there were 767 gross completions on PDL compared to total of 812 gross completions.

This equates to 95% of all gross completions being on PDL meaning that the borough has exceeded the 80% target in the Local Plan.

### Comparisons:

Historically Watford has seen a very high proportion of development on PDL and this trend has continued this year although 95% remains particularly high relative to trends in the previous iteration of the AMR.

### Implications for the Local Plan:

The Local Plan, and the NPPF, supports a 'brownfield first' approach to the delivery of housing, with only one site allocation being on a 'greenfield site'. As such it is expected that the majority of development will continue to take place on Previously Developed Land.

This year's figure of 95% meets the Local Plan target of 80% which is positive.

## Extant Permissions

Table 7 records the number of dwellings that have been granted planning permission over the monitoring year and the number of total extant permissions in the borough at the end of the monitoring year.

The number of dwellings being granted permission will have a direct impact on the level of housing development coming forward in future years and so it is a useful indicator to monitor.

Together with the lapse rate table in the next section (Table 8) this data will be used in the calculating of the boroughs five year housing land supply.

Table 7: Number of dwellings granted permission over the monitoring year (MY) (dwellings)

	2021/2022	2022/2023	2023/2024	2024/2025	2025/2026	Total
Number of dwellings granted planning permission over the MY	991					
Number of dwellings on extant permissions at the end of the MY	4,202					

### What Happened?:

Over the monitoring year 991 dwellings were granted planning permission. As of 31<sup>st</sup> March 2022 there were 4,202 dwellings with extant planning permission. This should provide a considerable supply of new homes over the coming years, even taking into account the fact that a proportion of these extant permissions will inevitably lapse without being implemented.

### Comparisons:

As this is the first year of the new monitoring framework, and of the new Watford Local Plan, it is impossible to make comparisons for this indicator. This year will be used as a benchmark against which future AMRs will be compared.

### Implications for the Local Plan:

There are a considerable number of extant housing permissions in the borough. It is likely that these permissions will provide the bulk of housing delivery in the short term and will contribute towards meeting the annual housing requirement of 784 dwellings set out in the Local Plan.

## Lapse Rate

It is a reasonable assumption that not all planning applications granted permission will end up being implemented. To ensure that the published housing supply in the borough is considered robust, an allowance should be made for the non-implementation of some permissions. This allowance is known as a lapse rate. The lapse rate is calculated by determining the percentage of all dwellings on extant permissions which have lapsed over a given period.

It was determined during the Local Plan examination that a 15% lapse rate is appropriate and reflective of past trends in the borough.

Table 8 below reports the number of lapsed permissions over the monitoring year and will compare this against this 15% figure over the plan period.

Table 8: Lapse rate in the monitoring year and plan period (dwellings)

	2021/2022	2022/2023	2023/2024	2024/2025	2025/2026	Total
Number of dwellings granted permission	991					
Number of dwellings lapsed	62					
Lapse rate	6%					

Table 9 below further breaks down this lapse rate data into major developments (10 or more dwellings) and minor developments (under 10 dwellings). Over the course of the plan period this will highlight whether non implemented permissions are evenly distributed between major and minor applications or whether they are mostly on larger or smaller developments. This will provide additional and useful data when it comes to reviewing the local plan policies and the five year supply assumptions in the borough.

Table 9: Lapse rates on major and minor developments (dwellings)

	2021/2022	2022/2023	2023/2024	2024/2025	2025/2026	Total
Number of dwellings granted permission on sites of 10 or more dwellings	863					
Number of dwellings lapsed on sites of 10 or more dwellings	39					
Lapse rate on sites of 10 or more dwellings	5%					
Number of dwellings granted permission on sites of less than 10 dwellings	128					
Number of dwellings lapsed on sites of less than 10 dwellings	23					
Lapse rate on sites of less than 10 dwellings	18%					

**What Happened?:**

Over the monitoring year 62 dwellings previously granted planning permission were on applications that lapsed between March and April 2021-2022. This is a lapse rate over the monitoring year of 6%.

Table 9 analyses whether this lapse rate has been consistent across all types of application or whether it is more prevalent in major or minor applications. Over this monitoring year, there was a lapse rate of 5% on major applications over 10 dwellings, compared to a lapse rate of 18% on minor applications of less than 10 dwellings. It will be interesting to monitor this over the plan period to determine if this is a trend.

**Comparisons:**

There was an assumed lapse rate of 15% provided at the examination of the Watford Local Plan based on historic trends. The overall lapse rate this year was considerably less than this figure, although the lapse rate on minor applications was just above this 15% baseline.

### Implications for the Local Plan:

It is positive to see a lower than average lapse rate over the monitoring year demonstrating the strong market conditions that exist in the borough which allow the vast majority of permissions to be implemented.

It is noted that the lapse rate on minor applications is considerably higher than major applications. This is the first year in which the Council has made this distinction in monitoring lapse rates and it will be interesting to continue to assess this going forward.

### Density of Residential Completions

The new Watford Local Plan sets minimum targets with regard to the density of new residential development within and outside the Core Development Area (CDA):

- Within the CDA new residential developments should be a minimum of 95 dwellings per hectare (dph).
- Outside the CDA new residential developments should be a minimum of 45 dwellings per hectare.

It is expected that within the CDA, higher density development will continue to be delivered in the most sustainable locations.

This indicator will highlight how the density of new development is changing across the area, as a reflection of the increased demand for new homes, and the effectiveness of the policy to distinguish between within the CDA and outside the CDA.

Table 10: Average density of residential development (dwellings per hectare)

	2021/2022	2022/2023	2023/2024	2024/2025	2025/2026	Total
Average density of residential completions within CDA	177dph					
Average density of residential completions outside CDA	95dph					
Overall average density of residential completions	116dph					

### What Happened?:

Over the monitoring year the average density of new residential development completed within the CDA was 177dph compared to outside the CDA where the density was an average of 95dph.

Across the whole borough the average density was 116dph.

In this first year of the plan period it is clear that the minimum density standards above have been exceeded both within the CDA and outside, and that the density of new development is considerably higher within the CDA than outside it.

#### **Comparisons:**

The density of new development in the previous AMR was 106dph, and prior to that, densities had been averaging around 60-65dph. It is clear that the density of new development in the borough is increasing and the new density minimum figures in the Local Plan reflect a desire to optimise densities and make more efficient use of available land.

Previously density figures were not split between CDA and outside the CDA and so comparisons between these are not possible in the first year of this new AMR.

#### **Implications for the Local Plan:**

The Local Plan seeks to optimise densities and make more efficient use of land by setting minimum density standards for within the CDA and outside the CDA. It is clear that over the first year of the plan period these densities have been exceeded. It will be important to monitor this indicator to get an idea of the density of new development being approved in the borough relative to these minimum densities and historic density rates in the borough.

## Delivery of Site Allocations

Chapter 13 of the Local Plan allocates several sites for housing and other mixed-uses. Details of any progress that has taken place on these allocations over the monitoring year can be found in section 12 of this AMR.

## Type of Dwellings

Previous AMRs have reported that the vast majority of new residential dwellings in Watford are 1 or two bedroom flats. The most recent previously published AMR indicated that the number of dwellings that were 3+ bedrooms was just 10%, a further reduction to the five year trend which showed 12.6% of dwellings being 3+ bedrooms.

The Local Plan evidence base (South West Local Housing Needs Assessment, 2020), indicated however, that there is a need in Watford for:

- 68% of market homes to be 3+ bedrooms
- 38% of affordable homes to be 3+ bedrooms.

It was clear however that were the Local Plan to require this mix it would not be able to meet its quantitative housing needs relative to Government targets.

The Local Plan has therefore sought to balance the delivery of local housing needs in quantitative terms, with the qualitative need to deliver larger family sized housing. Policy H03.2 requires new residential development to provide at least 20% family sized dwellings (3+ bed properties). Tables 11 and 12 will show the breakdown of type and size of dwelling in the borough over the monitoring year and the percentage of all completions in terms of dwelling size and type.

Table 11: Type of dwellings being completed over the monitoring year (gross) (dwellings)

		2021/2022	2022/2023	2023/2024	2024/2025	2025/2026	Total
Flats, Apartment or Maisonette	No.	728					
	%	90%					
Bungalow	No.	10					
	%	1%					
House	No.	40					
	%	5%					
Studio	No.	28					
	%	3%					
Other	No.	6					
	%	<1%					

Table 12: Size of dwelling units completed over the monitoring year (gross)

		2021/2022	2022/2023	2023/2024	2024/2025	2025/2026	Total
1 bed	No.	311					
	%	38%					
2 bed	No.	422					
	%	52%					
3 bed	No.	64					
	%	8%					
4+ bed	No.	15					
	%	2%					

**What Happened?:**

Over the monitoring year 90% of all residential completions were flats or apartments. Houses and Bungalows made up just 6% of all dwellings delivered over the year.

Just 10% of all dwellings delivered over the monitoring year were 3+ bedrooms and so counting as family sized. The Local Plan target for 20% of all dwellings to be family sized dwellings of 3+ bedrooms was not met over the monitoring year.

Over 50% of all dwellings completed were 2 bed units, with 38% being 1 bed.

### **Comparisons:**

The prevalence of flatted development compared to traditional housing types is a trend that has been seen in the borough over the past years. It is expected that this trend will likely continue, although it will be important to monitor the proportion of dwellings that are family sized in comparison to the target in Policy HO3.2.

The proportion of 3+ bedroom units over this monitoring year is equal to last year with 10% of all residential units and broadly reflective of historic trends.

### **Implications for the Local Plan:**

The Local plan targets for family sized dwellings have been missed in this monitoring year with just 10% delivered compared to the 20% target.

The provision of family sized units is a key element of meeting the housing needs of the borough, and so it will be important to monitor this going forward to determine how effective the requirements in Policy HO3.2 have been in securing family sized homes.

## [Affordable Housing](#)

The Watford Local Plan (Policy H03.3) sets a target of 35% of habitable rooms on residential developments of over 10 units to be affordable. Previously affordable housing was based on the number of units, but in the new Local Plan, the number of habitable rooms is used instead, as a way of trying to facilitate delivery of larger family sized affordable units rather than only delivering 1 or 2 bed units.

Whilst the policy is not specific on tenure mix across all the affordable housing typologies that are included within the NPPF definition, 60% of affordable dwellings should be social rent tenure.

Table 13 and 14 set out both the overall number and proportion of affordable housing delivered over the monitoring year as a percentage of total completions as well as breaking down this delivery into tenures, allowing comparison against the above local plan targets.

Note that the figures in the below tables are by number of units. The policy team will work on also reporting the number of affordable units by habitable room in future years as this will give a better indication on the effectiveness of Policy HO3.3.



Table 13- Number of Affordable houses (Net) (dwellings)

	2021/2022	2022/2023	2023/2024	2024/2025	2025/2026	Total
Number of net affordable dwellings completed	251					
% of all net completions	33%					

Table 14: Type of affordable dwellings completed over the monitoring year (gross) (dwellings)

		2021/2022	2022/2023	2023/2024	2024/2025	2025/2026	Total
Social rented	No.	30					
	%	10%					
Affordable rented	No.	229					
	%	75%					
Intermediate and Shared Ownership	No.	44					
	%	15%					
Build to rent	No.	0					
	%	0%					
Discounted Market	No.	0					
	%	0%					

**What Happened?:**

Over the monitoring year 251 affordable dwellings were completed in the borough, equal to 33% of all completions. This is slightly below the 35% target in Policy HO3.3 of the Local Plan by number of units. In future years the number of affordable units by habitable room will also be reported to accurately reflect the Local Plan policy and target.

Of these affordable completions, 10% were social rent compared to the local requirement of 60%, whilst 75% of all affordable units delivered were affordable rented; and 15% were shared ownership or intermediate tenure.

**Comparisons:**

251 net completions represents the largest number of affordable dwellings built in a single year in Watford since records in the AMR began in 2014 by a considerable margin. In comparison, the average annual affordable completions between 2014/15 and 2020/21 were 74 affordable dwellings per year.

**Implications for the Local Plan:**

It is considered particularly positive to see the volume of affordable housing coming forward over this monitoring year. A volume that falls just short of the 35% Local Plan target by number of units.

Only 10% of this provision was social rent tenure however, which is the tenure that is most in demand, reflected in the target in Policy HO3.3 for 60% of affordable housing provision to be social rent.

It will be important to evaluate the effectiveness of this policy requirement for social rent units and whether it leads to more social rent units in the short, medium and long term.

## Residential Conversions

Table 15 below sets out the number of residential conversions that have been permitted over the monitoring year.

Conversions and Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs) make an important contribution to an area's housing stock and as such are supported in the Local Plan where they are well located with regard to public transport and access to services and facilities, and where they would not result in unacceptable amenity impacts.

The delivery of this type of housing will need to be carefully managed and this indicator will allow the location of new HMOs to be evaluated with regard to avoiding over-concentrations of such units and their potential amenity impacts.

Table 15: Number of Residential conversions approved (applications)

	2021/2022	2022/2023	2023/2024	2024/2025	2025/2026	Total
Number of conversions from a single dwelling house into multiple smaller houses permitted	14					
Number of conversions of residential units into a large House in Multiple Occupation (HMO) of over 6 occupants	<i>No data available this year. Data will be reported in subsequent AMRs</i>					

The table above highlights two distinct types of conversion; the sub-division of an existing residential dwelling into a larger number of smaller dwellings and secondly the number of residential dwellings that have been converted into HMOs. Note that the above indicator only includes larger HMOs of 6 occupants or more; HMOs of less than 6 occupants can be created under Permitted Development and so it is not possible to monitor these effectively.

**What Happened?:**

Over the monitoring year, 14 applications were for the conversion of residential dwellings resulting in a net gain of residential C3 dwellings. This has resulted in a net increase of 19 dwellings (19 dwellings converted into 38 dwellings).

**Comparisons:**

As this is the first year of the new monitoring framework, and of the new Watford Local Plan, it is impossible to make comparisons for this indicator. This year will be used as a benchmark against which future AMRs will be compared.

**Implications for the Local Plan:**

It will be important to assess the number and location of units being delivered through conversions and HMOs to ensure that they are well located and that they do not contribute to or exacerbate amenity issues.

## Specialist Housing and Care Homes

Policy H03.5 of the Local Plan supports the provision of specialist housing to meet the needs of vulnerable people. This type of development will become increasingly important given the ageing population and the increasing number of residents with disabilities living in the borough. This indicator will therefore monitor the delivery of this type of development across the plan period.

Table 16: Number of specialist and care home beds completed and the number lost over the monitoring year

	2021/2022	2022/2023	2023/2024	2024/2025	2025/2026	Total
Number of specialist and care home beds completed	0					
Number of specialist and care home beds lost	0					

Table 17 will add further detail to the above table, reporting the number of specialist housing units completed and approved over the monitoring year, plus the location and type of these developments.

It is important given the wide variety of different specialist housing typologies to suit different levels of care and need that the type of specialist housing being delivered is monitored alongside the monitoring of overall housing.

Table 17: Location and type of specialist and care bed spaces completed and approved

Location/App number	Type of specialist housing (extra care/supported living)	Number of dwellings
N/A	N/A	N/A
Total		

### What Happened?:

Over the monitoring year there were no gains or losses of specialist care or extra care development.

### Comparisons:

As this is the first year of the new monitoring framework, and of the new Watford Local Plan, it is impossible to make comparisons for this indicator. This year will be used as a benchmark against which future AMRs will be compared.

**Implications for the Local Plan:**

Over the course of the plan period it will be crucial that the needs for specialist care homes are met, especially when considering the ageing population within the borough. This indicator will continue to report any delivery of this type, and assess whether more direct interventions are necessary as part of a future plan review.

## Student Accommodation

There are a variety of education institutions within and adjacent to Watford that could create a need for student accommodation in the borough. These include West Herts College, the Harrow branch of the University of Westminster and Middlesex University in Hendon.

Whilst the borough has no such facilities currently and at the start of the plan period there are no current permissions to deliver any student specific accommodation, this indicator will monitor any permissions or completions of this type that come forward over the plan period.

Table 18: Number of applications for student accommodation completed or approved

	2021/2022	2022/2023	2023/2024	2024/2025	2025/2026	Total
Number of student bed spaces completed	0					
Number of student bed spaces approved	0					

**What Happened?:**

Over the monitoring year there were no gains or losses of student bed spaces.

**Comparisons:**

As this is the first year of the new monitoring framework, and of the new Watford Local Plan, it is impossible to make comparisons for this indicator. This year will be used as a benchmark against which future AMRs will be compared.

**Implications for the Local Plan:**

The Local Plan provides a positive base on which proposals for student housing can be assessed. There is no identified demand currently for this type of unit and so there is no target to assess any provision against.

If the demand for this type of accommodation is shown to have increased in the borough then this will be considered in a future iteration of the Local Plan.

## Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation

Watford Borough Council currently accommodates a single 10-pitch gypsy and traveller site (which can accommodate up to 20 caravans) at Tolpits Lane in the south of the borough. This site is managed by Hertfordshire County Council. There are currently no transit sites in Watford.

The Local Plan allocates a site adjacent to the existing site at Tolpits Lane for the provision of two additional pitches. This meets in full the current identified need in the borough as set out in the Gypsy and Traveller assessment undertaken as part of the Local Plan evidence base.

Policy H03.8 sets out the basis by which proposals for Gypsy and Traveller accommodation will be assessed.

Table 19: Number of Gypsy and Traveller pitches completed or approved over the monitoring year

	2021/2022	2022/2023	2023/2024	2024/2025	2025/2026	Total
Number of Gypsy and Traveller pitches completed	0					
Number of Gypsy and Traveller pitches approved	0					

### What Happened?:

Over the monitoring year there were no gains or losses of Gypsy and Traveller pitches.

### Comparisons:

As this is the first year of the new monitoring framework, and of the new Watford Local Plan, it is impossible to make comparisons for this indicator. This year will be used as a benchmark against which future AMRs will be compared.

### Implications for the Local Plan:

The target for and allocation of 2 Gypsy and Traveller pitches reflects the assessed need in the latest Gypsy and Traveller Needs Assessment.

Any future Local Plan review would need to take account of an up to date Gypsy and Traveller Assessment. There is no indication of any demand for additional pitches in the borough at present.

## Self-Build and Custom Build Housing

Section 1 of the Self Build and Custom Housebuilding Act 2015, requires local authorities to keep a register of any person seeking to acquire serviced plots in the area for self-build and custom housebuilding. Under Section 2 of the Act they are also required to have regard to this register in developing strategies that will provide enough suitable permissions to meet this identified demand. These can be delivered as either market or affordable homes.

Table 20: Number of people seeking to acquire plots that are registered on the authorities' self-build register

Number on the register as of 31/3/2022	Number added over the monitoring year
62	9

There are currently 62 people that have requested to be listed on the council's self-build register. This is the number as of the end of the monitoring year. People can request to be added at any time of the year and so this figure may have changed at the time of reading. This will likely be only an indication of demand. In reality, there may be others who have not registered that would have the means and interest in self or custom build development if opportunities were to arise. There may also be those that are on the register who desire a self-build plot but in reality would not have the means to acquire or deliver a self-build development.

Table 21: Delivery of Self and Custom Build Units

	2021/2022	2022/2023	2023/2024	2024/2025	2025/2026	Total
Number of Self and Custom Build plots approved	0					
Number of Self and Custom Build units completed	0					
Number of CIL exemptions for self-build offered	2					

### What Happened?:

Over the monitoring year 9 people requested to be included on the Self and Custom Build Register.

Table 21 shows that over the monitoring year there were no self and custom build plots approved and there were no plots completed.

There were however two CIL exemptions offered for self-build over the monitoring year.

### Comparisons:

As this is the first year of the new monitoring framework, and of the new Watford Local Plan, it is impossible to make comparisons for this indicator. This year will be used as a benchmark against which future AMRs will be compared.

### Implications for the Local Plan:

Given the current and expected dominance of flatted developments in the borough, particularly within the CDA the opportunities for delivering self and custom build units may be limited. It is therefore important that any opportunities that do arise are taken advantage of to ensure that the demand for self-build is met.

The number of additional people being entered onto the self-build register is reported to assess growing demand that the council will have an obligation to try and meet.

## Building Standards

Policy H03.10 sets out four requirements relating to the quality of new residential units:

- Firstly, that all new homes will meet the nationally described space standards;
- Secondly, that all new housing will be designed to comply with M4(2) of the building regulations unless they are meeting M4(3) of the building regulations;
- Thirdly, on developments over 10 homes at least 4% of the dwellings should be wheelchair adaptable and built to M4(3) standard.
- Finally, on developments of 50 or more dwellings 2% are to be designed to support living someone living with dementia.

Meeting these standards is an important requirement for delivering high quality homes in the borough that provide a high quality of life for residents.

Table 22- Percentage of new development meeting building standards in H03.10

		2021/2022	2022/2023	2023/2024	2024/2025	2025/2026	Total
Number and percentage of completions meeting national space standards	No.	<i>No data available this year. Data will be reported in subsequent AMRs</i>					
	%						
Number and percentage of completions complying with	No.	<i>No data available this year. Data will</i>					



M4(2) accessibility standard		<i>be reported in subsequent AMRs</i>					
	%						
Number and percentage of completions on developments of over 10 dwellings meeting M4(3) accessibility standard	No.	<i>No data available this year. Data will be reported in subsequent AMRs</i>					
	%						
Number and percentage of dementia friendly homes delivered on sites of 50 or more dwellings	No.	<i>No data available this year. Data will be reported in subsequent AMRs</i>					
	%						

**What Happened?:**

*No data available this year. Data will be reported in subsequent AMRs*

**Comparisons:**

*No data available this year. Data will be reported in subsequent AMRs*

**Implications for the Local Plan:**

*No data available this year. Data will be reported in subsequent AMRs*

## 3. Employment and the Economy

The following indicators present a variety of data on the provision of new employment floorspace in the borough, and the gains and losses resulting from changes of use to and from employment.

In 2020, the Use Class Order was revised nationally, collating together a large number of uses including offices, and light industrial into a new single commercial use class (E).

The following indicators will therefore take into account the following Use Classes as defined in the Use Class Order (2020):

B Class:

- B2 (General Industrial)- Use for industrial processes other than uses falling within Class E(g)(iii) (*previously Class B1c*).
- B8 (Storage and Distribution).

E Class:

- E(g)- Previously B1 Use Class- uses which can be carried out in a residential area without detriment to its amenity:
  - E(g)(i)- Offices to carry out any operational or administrative function
  - E(g)(ii)- Research and Development of products or processes
  - E(g)(iii)- Industrial processes

Note that some of the applications reported in this section were approved prior to 2020 so were approved against the previous Use Class Order. For the purposes of the indicators in this section, the provision of both B1a, B1c and E Class Uses have been taken into account.

If demolition and rebuild applications are involved, these can often take place in one year and the replacement provision will not be completed until the following year (or years in the case of larger sites). This can sometimes be the cause of apparent net losses in employment floorspace. It is important therefore to assess trends in this section over a period of time rather than make overall conclusions based on a single monitoring year. Where it is clear that the losses are likely to be balanced by subsequent re-provision, this has been indicated in the analysis.

### Permitted Development and Article 4 Directions

Some changes of use involving commercial floorspace can take place through Permitted Development (PD) under the regulations of the General Permitted Development Order (GDPO, 2021) and not require planning permission. As these changes take place outside the planning system they cannot be monitored and as such will not be included within the following figures.

The Council has previously had Article 4 Directions in place to try and protect designated employment areas from changes of use through Permitted Development, reflecting the importance of these areas to local employment and the lack of alternative sites available for these uses, as well as concerns over the quality of development delivered through PD.

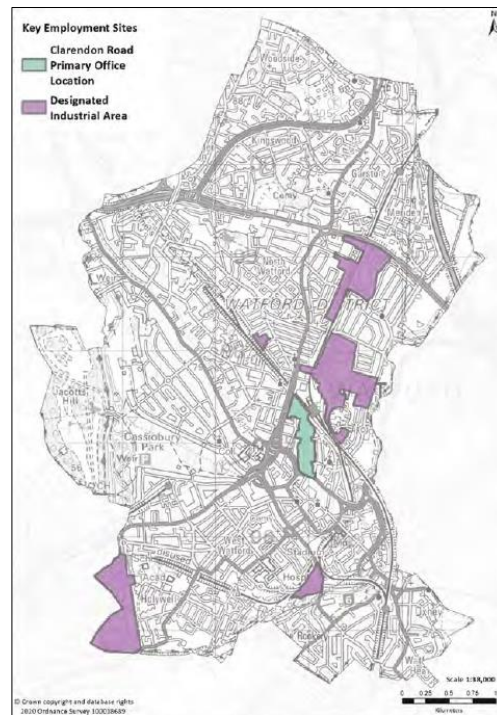
Given the changes to the Use Class Order and the Permitted Development Order (GDPO), these Article 4 Directions are currently being reconsidered as to whether they need to be re-issued or whether in light of these changes are no longer necessary. It is expected that progress will be made on this over the coming monitoring year to ensure that the correct protections are put in place where they are necessary.

Updates to these, and any other Article 4 Directions will be reported here each year.

### Watford Local Plan

The plan designates five separate industrial areas within which the loss of employment land will be resisted and designates a Primary Office Location along Clarendon Road which, along with the town centre, will be the focus for office development in the borough and for the protection of existing provision.

Figure 3: Locations of designated industrial and office areas in the Watford Local Plan



The plan includes provision for 85,488sqm of office floor space and 25,206sqm of industrial floor space. This represents, relative to identified needs across South West Hertfordshire, an over provision of office floor space and an under provision of industrial floor space.

The over provision of office floor space will help neighbouring authorities to meet their needs and reflects Watford’s role as the sub-regional hub of office based employment. The under provision of industrial floor space is reflective of the dense, residential, urban character of Watford and the lack of suitable sites available for these uses.

The following tables highlight this provision relative to the identified needs in Watford and South West Hertfordshire.

Table 23: Industrial floorspace supply and targets

Summary of industrial floorspace provision 2021-2038	Floorspace provision (sqm)
South West Hertfordshire requirement	481,500
Watford requirement	98,400
Provision through site allocations	12,799
Provision on sites with planning permission	12,407
Total industrial floorspace provision in the Local Plan	25,206

Table 24: Office floorspace supply and targets

Summary of office floorspace provision 2021-2038	Floorspace provision (sqm)
South West Hertfordshire requirement	188,000
Watford requirement	37,600
Provision through site allocations	19,428
Provision on sites with planning permission	66,060
Total office floorspace provision in the Local Plan	85,488

Policies EM4.1-EM4.6 set out the Plan’s approach to the economy and employment. The indicators in this section will monitor progress on the implementation of this strategy across the plan period.

### COVID-19

The COVID-19 pandemic had a particularly significant impact on the economy, and in particular, changing the way people work away from traditional working patterns. The Plan was adopted following the pandemic and many facets of life are normalised again.

The full impacts of the pandemic are still relatively unknown in relation to the economy but it is likely that levels of home working will increase in the long term and that more flexible types of working may become more common at the expense of traditional 9-5 patterns of office work.

It is vital therefore that this AMR monitors the economic sector closely during this recovery stage from the pandemic to identify longer term patterns and trends that could help the council deliver on the changing needs and demands of businesses and employees, going forward.

### Employment Floorspace Delivery

This indicator will record the net gains and losses of employment floor space in the borough over the plan period. It will do this collectively, and by Use Class, to allow analysis of the overall economic performance of the borough and the relative performance of individual employment sectors.

This indicator will take account of the changes to the Use Class Order in 2021 which removed B1a, b and c as Use Classes, replacing them with Class E(g)(i), E(g)(ii) and E(g)(iii). For the purposes of office, research and development and light industrial uses, these have been combined into a single figure for each in the new E Class.

Table 25: Net employment floorspace delivered over the monitoring year (sqm)

Use class	2021/2022	2022/2023	2023/2024	2024/2025	2025/2026	Total
B2 (General Industrial)	-1,214					
B8 (Storage and Distribution)	-2,121					
E(g)(i) (Offices)	15,507					
E(g)(ii) (Research and Development)	0					
E(g)(iii) (Industrial Processes)	-1,744					
Mixed E Class	-64					
Total	10,364					

### What Happened?:

There was an overall net gain of 10,364sqm of employment floorspace over the monitoring year. This was entirely due to net growth of office floorspace; other employment Use Classes experienced net losses.

This included a net loss of -1,214sqm in B2 floorspace; a net loss in B8 floorspace of -2,121sqm, and a loss of -1,744sqm of E(g)(iii) light industrial floorspace.

This loss of B8 floorspace was due to the loss of -1,400sqm of floorspace at Faraday Close (20/01188) and -721sqm of floorspace at Blackmoor Lane (19/00378/FUL).

This same Faraday Close development also contributed a net loss of -1400sqm to this year's net delivery of B2 and E(g)(iii) floorspace.

Although this is reported as a loss this year, the application is for the demolition and replacement of the current employment site with a larger development that includes a mix of commercial buildings replacing it. Once complete, this will result in an overall net growth in B2, B8 and E(g)(iii) floorspace. This is important to consider when putting this years reported loss of employment floorspace in context.

There was contrastingly a significant net growth of 15,507sqm of E(g)(i) office floorspace, largely due to a single large development on Clarendon Road, which delivered 24,451sqm on a single site (17/00558) over the monitoring year.

### Comparisons:

Historically there has been concern over a loss of employment floorspace in the borough which resulted in Article 4 Directions being put in place in 2013 on Clarendon Road and in 2019 on industrial areas.

Whilst there has been an overall net gain in employment floorspace, this has been due to the significant net gain in office floorspace, and it appears that there has continued to be a loss of floorspace this year for other industrial employment Use Classes.

It is important to recognise however that the site at Faraday Close contributed a net loss of -3600sqm to this year's employment floorspace figures but once the development is completed it will, in the long term, provide a net increase in floorspace of 2,574sqm.

It is particularly positive to see the growth in office development particularly in the Primary Office Location at Clarendon Road.

#### **Implications for the Local Plan:**

It is apparent that this year has seen a continuation of a trend in losing employment floorspace in non-office uses although the above explanation would maybe suggest that this is a slightly simplistic observation and that the actual picture is more nuanced with regard to the delay between demolition and reprovision of floorspace on Faraday Close.

The adoption of the Local Plan should allow the Council to exercise greater control over managing losses where appropriate and in resisting inappropriate proposals that result in a loss of employment floorspace.

It is positive to see the net growth in office floorspace, particularly as this growth was concentrated within the Primary Office Location on Clarendon Road.

It will be crucial to monitor this indicator over subsequent years to see if additional protections are necessary or whether the Local Plan policies and the market starts to contribute to improvements in the provision of employment floorspace.

### Designated Industrial Areas

The plan designates five parts of the borough as industrial areas. Policy EM4.2 states that within these areas proposals will only be supported where they result in no net loss of industrial floorspace other than in specific circumstances set out in the policy. The monitoring framework sets a target for there to be no net loss of industrial uses over the plan period within these locations.

Table 26 below highlights net gains and losses in B2, B8 , E(g)(iii) employment floor space within the five industrial areas over the monitoring year.

Over the plan period this indicator will be used to assess the health of the borough's key industrial areas and the extent to which they remain viable and growing.

Table 26: Net delivery of employment floor space within designated industrial areas over the monitoring year (sqm)

Use class	2021/2022	2022/2023	2023/2024	2024/2025	2025/2026	Total
B2 (General Industrial)	-1,400					
B8 (Storage and Distribution)	-2,121					
E(g)(ii) (Research and Development)	0					
E(g)(iii) (Industrial Processes)	-1,342					
Total	-4,863					

### What Happened?:

Over the monitoring year there was a loss of -4,863sqm of B2, B8 and E(g)(iii) class floor space within the designated industrial areas.

This loss was fairly consistently spread across the different Use Classes, with the exception of Use Class E(g)(ii) research and development where there was no net gain or loss.

Losses were experienced on just one of the designated industrial areas; -3600 at Faraday Close within the Watford Business Park estate, and -721 at Blackmore Lane on the same estate. The only other loss/gain of employment floorspace within designated estates was a net gain of 58sqm on Caxton Way which is also within the Watford Business Park estate.

As mentioned above, the development at Faraday Close contributed -1400sqm to this year's net loss of B2, B8 and E(g)(iii) floorspace. Although this is reported as a loss this year, the proposal is to demolish and replace the current employment site with a larger development including a mix of commercial buildings. This will result in an overall net growth in B2, B8 and E(g)(iii) floorspace when the replacement buildings come forward. This is important to consider when analysing the figures in this section.

### Comparisons:

Historically there has been concern over a loss of employment floorspace in the borough which resulted in Article 4 Directions being put in place.

Whilst it appears that there has continued to be a loss of floorspace this year it is important to recognise that the site at Faraday Close contributed -3600sqm to this years employment floorspace within designated industrial estates but once the development is completed it will, in the long term, provide a net increase in floorspace of 2,574sqm.

### Implications for the Local Plan:

The industrial areas were designated specifically to try and protect employment floorspace within the borough. It will need to be assessed through this indicator whether this designation is providing suitable protection or whether additional protection or guidance is needed.

The Council is currently considering whether to re-issue Article 4 Directions to cover the Industrial areas to ensure that proposals for changes of use in these areas are subject to consideration against Local Plan policies.

## Office Development

Policy EM4.3 states that applications within the Clarendon Road Primary Office Location or the town centre that would result in any net loss of office floor space will be resisted other than in certain circumstances set out in the policy. Policy EM4.3 also states that any office development proposed outside either the Primary Office Location or the Town centre will be subject to assessment against an office development hierarchy (Figure 4.3 of the Local Plan) to try and ensure that these areas remain the focus for office employment in the borough.

The monitoring framework sets a target for there to be no net loss of E(g)(i) Class office floor space within the Primary Office Location or the Town Centre. Table 27 highlights net gains or losses of office floor space within the Clarendon Road Primary Office Location and the Town Centre.

Over the plan period this indicator will provide key data on the health of Watford as a regional office hub.

Table 27: Net delivery of E(g)(i) office floorspace within the Primary Office Locations (sqm)

	2021/2022	2022/2023	2023/2024	2024/2025	2025/2026	Total
Net E(g)(i) class office floor space delivered within the Clarendon Rd Primary Office Location	20,470					
Net E(g)(i) class office floor space delivered within the Town Centre	-5,235					



**What Happened?:**

Over the monitoring year there was a net gain of 20,470sqm of office floor space on Clarendon Road but a net loss of -5,235sqm in the Town Centre.

This growth on Clarendon Road is largely down to the delivery of 24,451sqm of office floorspace at 64 and 73/77 Clarendon Road.

A large proportion of this loss (-4,459sqm) reported in the Town Centre was down to a single application converting an E Class Use into an F1 Use County Courthouse (21/00785/FUL). Whilst this use would be considered appropriate within a town centre, it does not fall within the definition of Main Town Centre Uses in the NPPF Glossary and so is shown as a loss in this indicator.

**Comparisons:**

As this is the first year of the new monitoring framework, and of the new Watford Local Plan, it is impossible to make comparisons for this indicator. This year will be used as a benchmark against which future AMRs will be compared.

**Implications for the Local Plan:**

The Local Plan is clear on the importance of the Clarendon Road Primary Office Location and the Town Centre to the local and regional economy and therefore seeks to resist the loss of floorspace whilst encouraging new floorspace to be delivered.

This indicator will be useful in highlighting the health of the office locations and provide evidence on the current state of the local and regional economic market.

## Employment Floorspace outside designated employment locations

Although employment in the borough is concentrated within the designated industrial and office areas there are other employment sites outside of these which continue to be an important part of the local economy. The Watford Employment Land Review (2017) shows that the risk of losing employment floor space in the borough is higher on sites outside these designated areas.

As such policy EM4.4 seeks to also prevent the loss of employment space outside designated locations other than in specific circumstances as set out in the policy and sets a target of no net loss of employment floor space over the plan period.

Table 28: Net delivery of office floorspace outside of designated employment locations (sqm)

	2021/2022	2022/2023	2023/2024	2024/2025	2025/2026	Total
Net E(g)(i) class floor space delivered outside the Clarendon Rd Primary Office Location or the Town Centre	458					

Table 29: Net delivery of B2, B8, E(g)(ii) and E(g)(iii) floorspace outside of the designated industrial areas (sqm)

Use class	2021/2022	2022/2023	2023/2024	2024/2025	2025/2026	Total
B2 (General Industrial)	186					
B8 (Storage and Distribution)	0					
E(g)(ii) (Research and Development)	0					
E(g)(iii) (Industrial Processes)	-402					
Total	-216					

### What Happened?:

Over the monitoring there was a net gain of 458sqm of office floorspace delivered outside of the Primary Office Location and the Town Centre.

Contrastingly, there was a net loss of industrial (B2/B8/E(g)(ii) and E(g)(iii)) floor space of -216sqm outside the designated industrial areas.

The majority of this loss was in E(g)(iii) (Light Industrial) Use Class resulting from the loss of 330sqm of floorspace on Nascot Street (19/00244).

The growth in office floorspace is mainly as a result of two developments, one on Tolpits Lane (20/00372/CM) delivering 319sqm of new office floorspace and a development on Blackmoor Lane (19/00378/FUL) delivering 938sqm of office floorspace.

### Comparisons:

As this is the first year of the new monitoring framework, and of the new Watford Local Plan, it is impossible to make comparisons for this indicator. This year will be used as a benchmark against which future AMRs will be compared.

### Implications for the Local Plan:

The Primary Office Location and employment area designations are intended to be the main focus for employment floorspace in the borough but the Local Plan is clear that employment floorspace outside these areas should also be subject to protection.

Whilst it is positive to see an increase in office floorspace outside the designated areas, it is concerning to see the loss of industrial floorspace that has been reported. It will be important to monitor this indicator over the coming years to see whether this trend continues and whether additional interventions might be required in the future.

### Employment Land Available

This indicator will highlight the current level of employment land permitted on applications which have not yet been implemented. This again takes into account permissions relating to the old Use Classes Order as well as the new Use Classes Order.

Table 30: Employment floor space available in Watford (with planning permission, not yet implemented/completed) (sqm)

Use class	2021/2022	2022/2023	2023/2024	2024/2025	2025/2026	Total
B2 (General Industrial)	4,469					
B8 (Storage and Distribution)	3,220					
E(g)(I) (Offices)	25,416					
E(g)(ii) (Research and Development)	250					
E(g)(iii) (Industrial Processes)	3,170					
Mixed E Class	6,989					
Total	43,514					

### What Happened?:

Currently, across the borough, there is a total of 43,514sqm of employment floorspace available taking into account all planning permissions that have not yet been implemented. This is a significant amount of committed employment floor space that should provide a substantial supply of floorspace going forward.

By far the largest amount of floorspace available is in E(g)(i) Class office uses which accounts for over 50% of all floorspace available.

### Comparisons:

As this is the first year of the new monitoring framework, and of the new Watford Local Plan, it is impossible to make comparisons for this indicator. This year will be used as a benchmark against which future AMRs will be compared.

### Implications for the Local Plan:

There is substantial employment floorspace permitted in the borough, particularly for E(g)(i) office uses. It is reasonable to think that the majority of this floorspace will come forward in the short-medium term, contributing to meeting the targets in the Local Plan.

This AMR will compare the delivery of employment floorspace against the targets in Table 4.1 and 4.2 of the Local Plan going forward.

## Delivery of Site Allocations

Chapter 13 of the Local Plan allocates several sites for employment uses. Details of any progress that has taken place on these allocations over the monitoring year can be found in chapter 12 of this AMR.

## Training and Skills

Policy EM4.6 of the Local Plan seeks to ensure that major development could provide employment and training initiatives for local people. This indicator will seek to capture any training programmes and apprenticeships that have arisen as a result of new development during the monitoring year.

Table 31: Training schemes and apprenticeships delivered as a result of development being permitted

Applications with training schemes or apprenticeship programmes for local people	
Application Reference	Details of scheme (description, type of scheme, number of people involved, length of time)
21/00934/VARM- 37-39 Clarendon Road	The developer of this site has implemented their own apprenticeship scheme for ex-servicemen on the site which is currently under construction for a mixed use development of office floorspace, 154 residential units and a café/restaurant use.

### What Happened?:

Over the monitoring there was one training schemes implemented as a result of new development, providing apprenticeships for ex-servicemen. This was not secured by the Council through s106 but through the developers own internal scheme.

**Comparisons:**

As this is the first year of the new monitoring framework, and of the new Watford Local Plan, it is impossible to make comparisons for this indicator. This year will be used as a benchmark against which future AMRs will be compared.

**Implications for the Local Plan:**

It is positive to see an apprenticeship scheme currently being implemented in the borough. The new Local Plan policy should provide a methodology by which more training schemes and apprenticeships can be secured through s106 agreements driven by the Council. As this is the first year of the Local Plan it is too early to make conclusions on the effectiveness of the Policy as a whole.

## 4.A Vibrant Town: Town Centre and Retail

Watford has a strongly performing Town Centre, a supporting District Centre on St Albans Road incorporating a wide range of services and facilities, and a series of Local Centres that meet the day to day needs of communities across the borough.

Figure 4: The location of the Town Centre, District Centre and Local Centres

Watford functions as a sub-regional Town Centre that serves residents of the town and beyond, drawing people from across South West Hertfordshire. The wide availability of facilities and shops within the Town Centre helps to attract people into the town, sustaining the dynamism and vibrancy of the Centre as well as supporting a large number of local jobs and businesses.

The continued success of the Town and other centres can also reduce the need to travel by car, encourage combined trips and promote sustainable transport methods such as walking and cycling.

Incorporating flexibility within the retail policies of the Plan was important in allowing the centres to evolve in response to the changing nature of the retail market, that national and local economy and to keep them vibrant and successful.

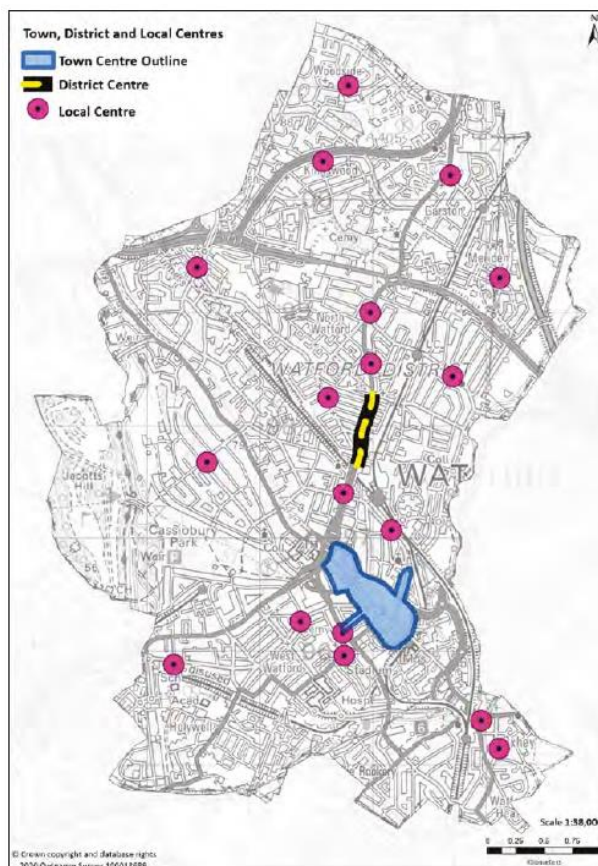
It is vital that trends on Town Centre, District Centre and Local Centres performance over the plan period is monitored. The indicators in this section will report on the provision and loss of traditional retail uses, and of all other uses that fall within the definition of 'main town centre uses' in the NPPF. It will also assess current vacancy rates within the centres as a key indicator of centre health.

### Watford Local Plan

Policies VT5.1, VT5.2 and VT5.3 set out the Plan's approach to development in the Town Centre, District Centre and Local Centres.

These policies are reflective of national policy; applying a sequential, 'town centre first' approach to the delivery of retail, and other main town centre uses. This supports the provision of main town centre uses in the town centre first of all, then edge of centre locations, then local centres and only supporting limited convenience floorspace outside these centres where they support the day to day needs of residents at new strategic sites.

There are several mixed use residential allocations in the plan that are located within the Town Centre boundary and it is likely that the population living within the Town Centre will increase over



the plan period. The provision of additional residential uses within the Town Centre can encourage increased footfall and promote the use of shops, services and businesses. It can also reduce the need for car parking due to the increased availability and viability of walking, cycling and public transport options for short journeys.

Chapter 2 of this AMR provides data on the delivery of residential dwellings in the Town Centre SDA (Table 5) and chapter 13 provides details and updates on the delivery of all allocated sites within the Town Centre. Although residential uses are supported in the Town Centre, the plan emphasises the importance of retaining active frontages on ground floors even if residential uses are being provided above, and that residential development should be designed sensitively with regard to heritage assets and conservation areas.

## COVID-19

As the country emerges from the pandemic, it will be important to monitor the performance of the centres and whether the pre-pandemic footfall levels resume in the short, medium and long term. This chapter monitors vacancy rates in all of the designated centres as a key indicator of their current health and viability.

## Town Centre Strategic Framework

Over the monitoring year progress has been made on producing a town centre framework document which sets out a vision and a series of recommendations relating to the future development and enhancement of the Town Centre. This document will be used as a planning framework to inform development in the Town Centre particularly focusing on issues of connectivity, heritage, public realm and sustainable transport. Updates on this project will be provided annually in this AMR.

## Town Centre Design SPD

To build on the principles in the Town Centre Framework the Council’s policy team is producing design guidance in the form of an SPD for the Town Centre. This is a reaction to the significant amount of development likely to come forward in this area and the unique design and policy considerations and challenges within this area. Updates on this project will be provided annually in this AMR.

## Maintaining ground floor units, within a defined Town District or Local Centre: Delivery of Retail uses over the Monitoring Year

The plan supports the provision of retail uses within the centres as defined in Figure 4. Table 32 records the net growth in retail uses over the monitoring year within the Town centre, District Centre and Local Centres.

Table 32: Net delivery of retail E(a) floor space (sqm) over the monitoring year

Location	2021/2022	2022/2023	2023/2024	2024/2025	2025/2026	Total
Town Centre	711					
District Centre	0					
Local Centres	-163					
Outside Centres	126					
Total	674					

**What Happened?:**

Over the monitoring year there was an overall net growth of 674sqm in Class E(a) retail floorspace across the borough.

A net gain of 711sqm of retail floorspace was delivered within the designated Town Centre, virtue of two applications on The Parade, both were the conversion of Sui Generis units to retail use.

There was however a loss in retail floor space of -163sqm within the Local Centres. This loss resulted from two applications converting retail units into a Sui Generis Use and so they remain as active commercial units. One of these was in Goodwood Parade on Courtlands Drive and the other on Langley Road.

There was no net gain or loss in E(a) Class Uses in the District Centre.

Outside of any designated centre there was a net increase of 126sqm resulting from the extension of the kiosk at Sheepcot service station on the North Orbital Road.

**Comparisons:**

This is the first year of the new monitoring framework, and of the new Watford Local Plan, it is impossible to make comparisons for this indicator. This year will be used as a benchmark against which future AMRs will be compared.

It will be important to monitor the growth and loss of retail floorspace to assess trends regarding the health and viability of the designated centres.

**Implications for the Local Plan:**

The growth of retail floorspace in the Town Centre over the monitoring year highlights the positive performance of the Centre as the focus for retail uses.

Whilst there has been a small loss of retail floorspace in the Local Centres, the losses have been from a retail use to a Sui Generis use, and so they are retained as active commercial units, maintaining the vitality and vibrancy of the area.

The Local Plan highlights the importance of these centres to the economic performance of the borough, and monitoring the gains and losses in retail floorspace will provide a measure by which the Council can determine the success of the Local Plan's retail policies in protecting centres as the primary locations for retail uses.



## Main Town Centre Uses in the Town Centre, District Centre and Local Centres

This indicator assesses the delivery and provision of all ‘main town centre uses’ in the different centres, broadening the previous indicator which focused only on class E(a) retail uses. This indicator will report on the provision of all the following uses. These are all defined as main town centre uses in the NPPF glossary definition.

- Retail units
- Leisure uses
- Cinemas
- Restaurants
- Drive through restaurants
- Bars and Pubs
- Nightclubs
- Casinos
- Health and Fitness centres
- Indoor bowling
- Bingo halls
- Offices
- Theatres
- Museums
- Galleries
- Concert halls
- Hotels
- Conference facilities

Table 33 below sets out the net delivery of any ‘main town centre uses’ within the Town Centre, District Centre and Local Centres. Note that the figures in this table also include the retail provision that was assessed in isolation in Table 32 above. Also note that these figures **do not** include Class E(a) Office floorspace which, although counting as Main Town Centre Uses, were assessed in the previous chapter on employment.

Table 33: Net delivery of main town centre uses over the monitoring year (sqm)

Location	2021/2022	2022/2023	2023/2024	2024/2025	2025/2026	Total
Town Centre	-3,748					
District Centre	0					
Local Centres	-163					
Total	-3,911					

### What Happened?:

Over the monitoring year there was a net loss of -3,911sqm of floorspace in main town centre uses within designated centres. This included -3,748sqm of floorspace within the Town Centre, accompanied by a loss of 163sqm within the Local Centres.

This loss reported in the Town Centre was exclusively down to a single application converting an E Class Use into an F1 Use county courthouse (21/00785/FUL). Whilst this use would be considered

appropriate within a Town Centre, it does not fall within the definition of main town centre uses in the NPPF Glossary. This has resulted in this indicator reporting a substantial loss.

Removing this application from the above table would leave a net growth of 711sqm within the Town Centre and 548sqm across all designated centres.

### **Comparisons:**

As this is the first year of the new monitoring framework, and of the new Watford Local Plan, it is impossible to make comparisons for this indicator. This year will be used as a benchmark against which future AMRs will be compared.

### **Implications for the Local Plan:**

There has been a considerable overall loss of main town centre uses within the Town Centre, and a smaller loss in the Local Centres. This is contrary to the objectives in the Local Plan to maintain the role of the centres as the primary locations for town centre uses.

However, in analysing this loss in more detail, the reported loss is down to a single change of use from an office use to a law courts. Whilst law courts would not technically fall within the definition of main town centre uses as defined in the NPPF they are a suitable use within the Town Centre and so this year's loss is not considered to be overly significant with regard to a loss of town centre uses.

Additionally, the loss in the Local Centres was to a Sui Generis use that will retain the active frontages, vibrancy and vitality of the centres.

Table 34 sets out the current proportion of centres that are in a main town centre uses as defined in the NPPF. This is assessed in terms of number of units.

This indicator will be useful to monitor over the plan period as it will provide an indication of the health of the centres and the extent to which they remain viable locations, not just for retail but for services and facilities, leisure, arts and culture.

This data is collected through the undertaking of a retail survey by Hertfordshire County Council. This year, the survey is to be undertaken in early 2023 and so will likely be too late to report on in this year's AMR. The Council will consider whether to publish this information separately over the next monitoring year or whether to report the results in the next AMR.

Table 34: % of each centre that are in active town centre uses

Location	2021/2022	2022/2023	2023/2024	2024/2025	2025/2026	Total
Town Centre	<i>No data available this year. Data will be reported in subsequent AMRs</i>					
District Centre	<i>No data available this year. Data will be reported in subsequent AMRs</i>					
Local Centres	<i>No data available this year. Data will be reported in subsequent AMRs</i>					

**What Happened?:**

*No data available this year. Data will be reported in subsequent AMRs*

**Comparisons:**

*No data available this year. Data will be reported in subsequent AMRs*

**Implications for the Local Plan:**

*No data available this year. Data will be reported in subsequent AMRs*

Vacancy Rates in Town, Local and District Centres

This indicator will monitor the number, location and proportion of vacant ground floor units within the Town Centre, District Centre and Local Centres.

Having a large number of vacant units within a centre can have impacts on the centre’s perceived and actual vitality and viability, affecting the surrounding public realm, people’s perceptions of a place and the local economy.

Table 35 assesses the number and percentage of units in each of the centres that are vacant as of the end of each monitoring year.

These figures only include ground floor units as these have a greater impact on the vitality of a centre and ensures that the data is not distorted by a large number of upper floor residential units, which are less likely to be vacant, being included.

It is recognised that there may be some units that become vacant and active again within the same monitoring year which will not be recorded in these figures but as there would be no net difference over the monitoring year, this is not considered to be a limitation in the accuracy of the data.

This data is collected through the undertaking of a retail survey by Hertfordshire County Council. This year, the survey is to be undertaken in January 2023 and so will be too late to report on in this year’s AMR. The Council will consider whether to publish this information separately over the next monitoring year or whether to just report the results in the next AMR.

The Atria Centre, which is the main indoor shopping centre situated within the Town Centre has been included as a separate category in the above table. This is due to the way the data will be recorded in the shop front survey, from which these vacancy figures are taken, where the Atria Centre is assessed separately from the rest of the Town Centre.

Table 35: Vacancy rates in the Town Centre, District Centre and Local Centres

Location		2021/2022	2022/2023	2023/2024	2024/2025	2025/2026	Total
Town centre	No.	<i>No data available this year. Data will be reported in subsequent AMRs</i>					
	%						
Atria shopping Centre	No.	<i>No data available this year. Data will be reported in subsequent AMRs</i>					
	%						
District centre	No.	<i>No data available this year. Data will be</i>					

		<i>reported in subsequent AMRs</i>					
	%						
Local centres	No.	<i>No data available this year. Data will be reported in subsequent AMRs</i>					
	%						
Total	No.						
	%						

**What Happened?:**

*No data available this year. Data will be reported in subsequent AMRs*

**Comparisons:**

*No data available this year. Data will be reported in subsequent AMRs*

**Implications for the Local Plan:**

*No data available this year. Data will be reported in subsequent AMRs*

## 5. An Attractive Town: Design and Building Height

New development provides an opportunity to make a positive contribution to the character and appearance of an area, however poorly designed developments can lead to negative impacts on both the character and environment of a place as well as having negative impacts on residents' health and quality of life.

Ensuring that Local Plan policies contribute to achieving a high quality of design is therefore crucial in creating successful places both in terms of the internal and external environment where people live. Both can help to create a safe, attractive and sustainable borough that improves the health and wellbeing of residents.

The policies in the Local Plan do not, therefore, only focus on a developments external appearance but also its sustainability, its compliance with internal standards, and its impacts on the surrounding area. The policies provide both general design principles and specific design requirements.

Watford has recently experienced a significant increase in the number of applications for taller buildings, particularly in the Core Development Area. A key issue in the preparation of the new Local Plan has therefore been how high density development can be incorporated into the borough without having unacceptable impacts on the character of the area or on important heritage assets.

The Local Plan sets out specific requirements for buildings that exceed set base building heights. These base building heights vary depending on location as shown in Figure 5. Buildings exceeding base building heights should be of outstanding design, and provide substantial public and sustainability benefits.

This section of the AMR will report on the extent to which the standards for design set out in the Local Plan are being met and report on how the policies are being applied in practice. It will record specifically the number of applications where design is a listed reason for refusal and on both refusals and approvals of development proposing to exceed the base building heights.

This section should be read in conjunction with Table 22 of the housing chapter which outlined the extent to which internal space and accessibility standards were being met, and Table 10 of the housing chapter which sets out the average density of new residential development in the borough.

In this first monitoring year for the new Local Plan, it has proved difficult to source reliable data for some indicators in this section in particular. Processes have been put in place that should enable more comprehensive coverage in the next AMR.

### Watford Local Plan

Policies QD6.1 to QD6.4 set out broad and detailed design principles that will direct the delivery of high quality development in the borough.

These principles include the following topics:

- **Character and Identity-** Making sure new buildings and streets are attractive and distinctive including consideration of how the area looks, feels and functions. They should make a positive contribution to the character of the area so that it is identifiable and relatable to residents.
- **Built Form-** Ensure that the scale and massing of proposed buildings relate to their local context.
- **Active Frontages-**New buildings should include an active frontage to ensure there is a visual and physical relationship between the street and the building.
- **Movement and Connectivity-** Streets should be efficient, convenient, legible and permeable to prioritise non-vehicle travel.
- **Views-** New development should contribute positively towards important views in the borough.
- **Sustainability-** Development should be designed to minimise negative impacts on the environment and embrace sustainability principles. This should include measures to reduce the use of resources.

Policy QD6.5 sets out the criteria that a proposal needs to meet for it to be acceptable as a ‘taller building’ in the borough. This has become a significant issue for Watford and as such this policy, and the monitoring of it, is a vital one for the future growth of the borough over the plan period.

The plan sets four different base building heights; within each of the three Strategic Development Areas (SDAs) and then a single base height for any proposals that are located outside the Core Development Area (CDA). These base building heights can be seen in Figure 5 below. Development proposed over and above these base building heights will be considered a taller building and subject to the requirements of Policy QD6.5.

Area of the borough	Base building height
Watford Gateway	Up to 8 storeys on a street frontage, stepping up to 10 storeys to the rear.
Town Centre Strategic Development Area	Up to 5 storeys on the High Street, stepping up to 8 storeys to the rear.
Colne Valley Strategic Development Area	Up to 6 storeys.
Outside of the Core Development Area	Up to 4 storeys.

Figure 5: Base Building Heights

This AMR will record the number of tall buildings (over the base building heights) that have been approved over the monitoring year and the number of applications where Policy QD6.5 is listed as a reason for refusal.

### High Quality Design

This indicator will provide details of how many applications where Policy QD6.2 or Policy QD6.4 are listed as reasons for refusal.

Table 36 includes new build development, both residential and non-residential, but it excludes any extensions or other householder applications where the above policies have been referenced.

Table 36: Number of applications where Policy QD6.2 (Design Principles) or QD6.4 (Building Design) are listed as a reason for refusal.

Location	2021/2022	2022/2023	2023/2024	2024/2025	2025/2026	Total
Residential	<i>No data available this year. Data will be reported in subsequent AMRs</i>					
Non-residential B use	<i>No data available this year. Data will be reported in subsequent AMRs</i>					
Non-residential E use	<i>No data available this year. Data will be reported in subsequent AMRs</i>					
Other uses	<i>No data available this year. Data will be reported in subsequent AMRs</i>					
Total						

**What Happened?:**

*No data available this year. Data will be reported in subsequent AMRs*

**Comparisons:**

*No data available this year. Data will be reported in subsequent AMRs*



**Implications for the Local Plan:**

*No data available this year. Data will be reported in subsequent AMRs*

**Public Realm**

Providing a high quality and functional public realm is crucial to creating places and environments in which communities and businesses can thrive. Policy QD6.3 requires new development to be designed in a way that makes places safe, accessible, inclusive and attractive. Criteria a-f of this policy will ensure that new development has a positive impact on the surrounding public realm.

Table 37 below reports the number of new build applications where Policy QD6.3 is listed as a reason for refusal.

Table 37: Number of applications where Policy QD6.3 (Public Realm) is listed as a reason for refusal

Location	2021/2022	2022/2023	2023/2024	2024/2025	2025/2026	Total
Residential	<i>No data available this year. Data will be reported in subsequent AMRs</i>					
Non-residential B use	<i>No data available this year. Data will be reported in subsequent AMRs</i>					
Non-residential E use	<i>No data available this year. Data will be reported in subsequent AMRs</i>					
Other uses	<i>No data available this year. Data will be reported in subsequent AMRs</i>					
Total						

**What Happened?:**

*No data available this year. Data will be reported in subsequent AMRs*

**Comparisons:**

*No data available this year. Data will be reported in subsequent AMRs*

**Implications for the Local Plan:**

*No data available this year. Data will be reported in subsequent AMRs*

Public realm improvements and projects can be undertaken without links to a planning application or a new development. Over the plan period the AMR will also provide a written commentary on any major public realm enhancements undertaken in the borough over the monitoring year. This will likely not be an exhaustive list and is provided for information only.

During the 2021 to 2022 monitoring year, the following public realm projects were started or completed:

- Clarendon Road (phase 2) between St Johns Road and Station Road. The footpaths on either side of the road were upgraded using granite paving. In addition a new surface water drainage system was installed connecting to the Thames Water main. The carriageway has been narrowed to help enforce the 20mph speed limit and was resurfaced. New pedestrian facilities have been introduced at road junctions with new upgraded signal controlled crossings. New seats, street trees and planting have been supported by uplighters to enhance the street scene and the street lighting has been upgraded to support festive lighting and vertical banners
- Queens Road project- This project is ongoing and is being progressed
- Market Street project- This project is ongoing and is being progressed
- The Town Centre Strategic Framework includes various suggestions for public realm enhancements within the Town Centre and has been progressed over the monitoring year.

## Building Height

Building height is an important issue for the borough, both for local residents and for the Council. There has been a growing prevalence in applications for taller buildings in the borough. Policy QD6.5 sets out the criteria that a proposal over the base building heights must meet for it to be acceptable.

The following tables report a variety of indicators relating to building height. The first indicator shows the number of applications/dwellings that have been completed over the monitoring year that were delivered over the base building heights set out in the Local Plan and replicated in Figure 5 above.

These applications were all approved prior to the base building heights being formally adopted in the Local Plan. It is however useful to assess the current situation with regard to building height, to provide a baseline against which to assess monitoring the effectiveness of the base building heights being in place and Policy QD6.5 in the Local Plan.

Table 38: Applications completed over the monitoring year that are in excess of the base building heights

Core Development Area (CDA)/Not Core Development Area	2021/2022	2022/2023	2023/2024	2024/2025	2025/2026
Not CDA	90 comps				
	10 storeys				
Not CDA	23 comps				
	5 storeys				
Town Centre Strategic Development Area (SDA)	56 comps				
	7 storeys				

Table 39: Extant permissions that are over the base building heights

Core Development Area (CDA)/Not Core Development Area	2021/2022	2022/2023	2023/2024	2024/2025	2025/2026
Not CDA	315 dws				
	25 storeys				
Not CDA	248 dws				
	13 storeys				
Not CDA	16 dws				
	7 storeys				
Not CDA	86 dws				
	6 storeys				
Not CDA	279 dws				
	11 storeys				
Not CDA	126 dws				
	5 storeys				
Not CDA	72 dws				
	5 storeys				
	407 dws				

Colne Valley SDA	11 storeys				
Colne Valley SDA	192 dws				
	8 storeys				
Watford Gateway SDA	964 dws				
	28 storeys				
Watford Gateway SDA	41 dws				
	14 storeys				

**What Happened?:**

Table 38 shows that there were 3 permissions completed over the monitoring year that were above the base building heights. Two of these were outside the CDA and one was in the Town Centre SDA. These delivered a total of 169 dwellings and were 10, 7 and 5 storeys.

Table 39 shows that there are currently 11 extant permissions that are above base building heights. The majority of these are currently under construction and may be partially completed at the end of the monitoring year.

These 11 applications will deliver 2,746 dwellings. They are in a mix of locations inside and outside the CDA and vary in height from 5 storeys to 28 storeys.

**Comparisons:**

As this is the first year of the new monitoring framework, and of the new Watford Local Plan, it is impossible to make comparisons for this indicator. This year will be used as a benchmark against which future AMRs will be compared

**Implications for the Local Plan:**

The above permissions were all approved prior to the adoption of the new Local Plan and the introduction of base building heights. It is expected that the policies in the new Local Plan will give the Council greater ability to resist inappropriately tall development and will ensure that any proposals above the base building heights are of outstanding quality and that they provide substantial public benefits.

It will be interesting to keep these tables updated over the plan period to consider whether the number of buildings above the base building heights decreases or whether the borough is still subject to development in excess of these.

Table 40 below records the number of applications and the number of dwellings that have been approved within this monitoring year and are proposing to exceed the base building heights. This is divided into the three Strategic Development Areas (SDAs) and areas outside the Core Development Area (CDA).

Both numbers of applications and numbers of dwellings are reported to try and assess the effectiveness of the policy, as well as the impact that approvals exceeding building heights are having on housing supply and delivery.

Table 40: Applications approved over the monitoring year that are in excess of the base building heights

		2021/2022	2022/2023	2023/2024	2024/2025	2025/2026	Total
Watford Gateway SDA	No. Apps	0					
	No. of Dws	0					
Town Centre SDA	No. Apps	0					
	No. of Dws	0					
Colne Valley SDA	No. Apps	0					
	No. of Dws	0					
Outside the CDA	No. of Apps	2					
	No. of Dws	171					
Total	No. of Apps	2					
	No. of Dws	171					

**What Happened?:**

Over the year, two applications were approved despite being completely, or partially, in excess of the base building heights set out in Policy QD6.5.

Both applications were outside the CDA. One of which on St Albans Road (21/00698/FULM) was only partially in excess of the base building height, with two blocks being 5 storeys.

The other application, on Cherry Tree Road (21/00455/AAPA) was also 5 storeys, in excess of the base building height of up to 4 storeys.

These two applications will provide a total of 171 dwellings, 127 on one site and 44 on the other.

### Comparisons:

As this is the first year of the new monitoring framework, and of the new Watford Local Plan, it is impossible to make comparisons for this indicator. This year will be used as a benchmark against which future AMRs will be compared.

This indicator will be monitored going forward to indicate how much of the boroughs possible future growth is to come forward on tall buildings, and where these applications are being concentrated.

### Implications for the Local Plan:

The building height policy does not prevent buildings over the base building heights being delivered, rather it requires developments that exceed them to be of outstanding design, significant public benefits and substantial sustainability benefits in order for them to be permitted.

The two applications this year that exceed the base building height were both marginally over by one storey. These applications were determined prior to the adoption of the new Local Plan, so Policy QD6.5 did not have full weight.

This indicator will help to consider how successful the policy has been in preventing inappropriate taller development, or whether additional policy guidance is required in the future.

Table 41 below sets out the number of applications that were refused on the basis of their height. This, along with the above indicator on approvals, will help to make an assessment on the effectiveness of this policy.

Table 41: Applications refused over the monitoring in which Policy QD6.5 (Building Height) was listed as a reason for refusal

Location	2021/2022	2022/2023	2023/2024	2024/2025	2025/2026	Total
Watford Gateway SDA	<i>No data available this year. Data will be reported in subsequent AMRs</i>					
Town Centre SDA	<i>No data available this year. Data will be reported in subsequent AMRs</i>					

Colne Valley SDA	<i>No data available this year. Data will be reported in subsequent AMRs</i>					
Outside the CDA	<i>No data available this year. Data will be reported in subsequent AMRs</i>					
Total						

**What Happened?:**

*No data available this year. Data will be reported in subsequent AMRs*

**Comparisons:**

*No data available this year. Data will be reported in subsequent AMRs*

**Implications for the Local Plan:**

*No data available this year. Data will be reported in subsequent AMRs*

## 6. The Historic Environment

Both national and local policy attach great importance to the preservation of the historic environment. The NPPF recognises heritage assets as an irreplaceable resource that should be given great weight in decision making, whilst the Local Plan reiterates the need to conserve, and where possible enhance, the significance of assets.

Watford has a wide range of heritage assets, including locally and nationally listed buildings, conservation areas, and historic parks and gardens. These assets have considerable value to local people and add significantly to the character of the town.

The following list replicated from paragraph 7.2 of the Local Plan sets out some of the key features of the town's heritage:

- Surviving buildings from the medieval core of the town (St Mary's Church, Almshouses, Fuller Free School);
- 18th Century town houses (Frogmore House , 97 High Street, Little Cassiobury and Watford Museum);
- Industrial heritage;
- Parks, gardens and cemeteries;
- Residential streets and buildings of the Victorian period; and
- Innovative twentieth-century buildings and housing developments.

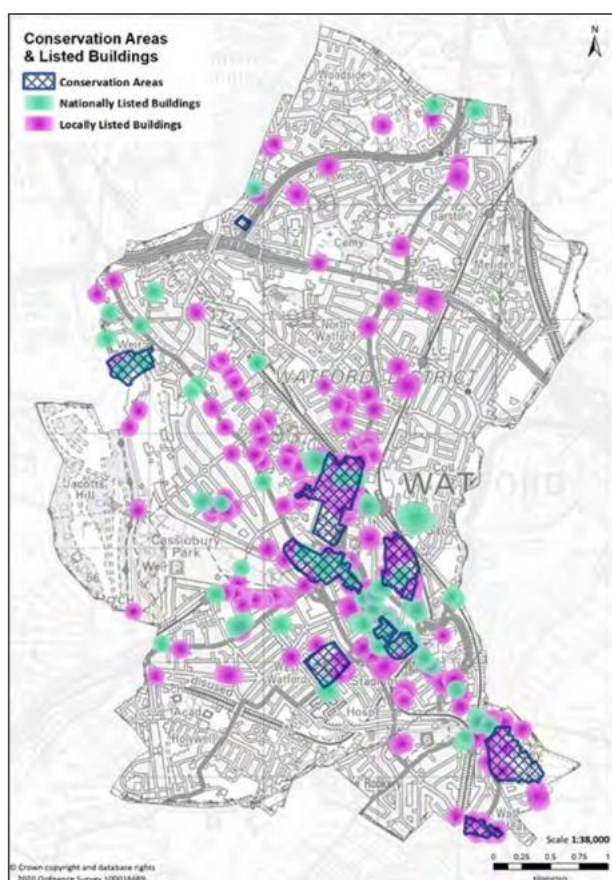


Figure 6: Heritage assets in Watford

### Watford Local Plan

Policies HE7.1-HE7.4 set out the Council's approach to the historic environment. This AMR will monitor the impacts of new development on the historic environment, as well as reporting on any major heritage projects or issues that have arisen over the monitoring year.

Overall the policies in the Plan seek to give great weight to the conservation of important historic assets and avoid and mitigate any possible harm or loss to this significance.

### Conservation Areas

The town's historic environment is protected by the designation of several conservation areas. These will be reviewed as part of an ongoing project to update the Watford



Conservation Areas Management Plan. The existing conservation areas can be seen in Figure 6.

Conservation areas exist to manage and protect the special architectural and historic interest of a place. Applications submitted within them are subject to additional planning controls and considerations in order to protect the unique character of the area.

This AMR will report any progress on the Conservation Areas Management Plan review and any changes to the conservation areas over the monitoring year in the below boxes.

**What Happened?:**

Work has progressed over the monitoring year, on a review of the Watford Conservation Areas Management Plan to ensure that it reflects the latest policy and guidance. An informal, early-stage consultation took place in August and September 2022 just after the end of the 2021/2022 monitoring year. Work is currently progressing on the updated document, with a consultation on the proposed actions due to take place in 2023.

If adopted, the updated document will set out actions that the Council will take to ensure that special architectural or historic interest is protected for future generations.

**Implications for the Local Plan:**

The review of the Conservation Areas Management Plan will allow the Council to better assess proposals that sit within, or adjoining, conservation areas and ensure that they respond to the unique character of the area in accordance with Policy HE7.2 of the Local Plan.

## Heritage at Risk

Every year Historic England publishes a Heritage at Risk report that identifies those sites most at risk of being lost as a result of neglect, decay or inappropriate development. The Historic England report only includes buildings of Grade I or Grade II\* status, with the exception of places of worship, which can be included even at Grade II. The Council produces a local Buildings at Risk (BAR) register, which includes other types of Grade II properties. The list was last updated in 2017, but any additional buildings at risk that have come to light in the intervening years have been included below.

This indicator will report any individual assets or conservation areas in Watford that are considered at risk and any changes from the previous year. The objective over the plan period is to reduce the number of assets at risk and to prevent any additional assets from becoming at risk.

Table 42: Heritage Assets at risk in Watford

Asset Name/Conservation Area	Condition and Description
Little Cassiobury and former stable block, Hempstead Rd (Grade II*)	Condition poor – Late C17 house built as dower house to Cassiobury. Last occupied as offices, the building has been empty for many years. Raised to Priority A by Historic England following site visits in September 2022.
Gateway and attached walls of approx. 30m northwest of 42, The Gardens (Grade II)	Condition poor/fair – Mid to late C16 walls and gateway, altered c.1830, formed part of the gardens of Cassiobury. Visible cracks and movement in brickwork (loose and missing bricks), missing pointing, and vegetation growing on and around structure noted when assessed in 2017.
Administration Block at Watford General Hospital, Vicarage Road (Grade II)	Poor – Former Watford Union Workhouse of 1838 with later alterations. Currently disused and in need of extensive renovation work. Recently damaged by car impact, although that is currently being repaired.
97 High Street (Grade II)	Poor - Townhouse of c.1740 with notable surviving interior. The building is a state of considerable disrepair, although some works have taken place since 2020 to limit further water ingress.
Watford Place, 27 King Street (Grade II)	Poor/Fair – Georgian mansion of c1797, altered c.1822. One wing severely damaged by fire in 2015.
The Old Station House, 147 St Albans Road (Grade II)	Poor/Fair – The former ticket office of Watford's original station, built in 1837. Currently unoccupied and has been subject to some vandalism. Permission has been granted for re-use of the building as part of redevelopment of the surrounding land but renovation work on the building has yet to start.

### What Happened?:

There are currently 6 designated heritage assets considered to be at risk in Watford.

The following heritage assets are no longer considered to be at risk, and have been removed from the register over the monitoring year:

- Frogmore House, High Street (Grade II\*) – Restored as part of the redevelopment of the former gas works site, the building was Highly Commended at the 2022 Civic Trust Awards, AABC Conservation Awards & Selwyn Goldsmith Awards for Universal Design. The building has been returned to use as an office.
- 63 and 65 High Street (Grade II) – The façade of the former Bucks and Oxon Bank, built in 1899, was restored as part of the Charter Place redevelopment (now Atria). The building is now occupied by Côte Brasserie.

## Applications Impacting Historic Assets

The recording of an asset as a nationally or locally listed building does not prevent applications for it being submitted. Listed buildings do, however, have significant additional protection when applications are received by the Council.

Policy HE7.1, HE7.2 and HE7.3 of the Local Plan seek to ensure that development impacting a heritage asset does not diminish its significance, and where possible it should enhance it. All applications will be determined in accordance with an asset's significance and heritage value.

Historic England are consulted on all developments that could have an impact on designated heritage assets and provide comments based on their expert opinions. This indicator records any applications that have been granted permission by the Council over the monitoring year contrary to advice received from Historic England. The objective is for there to be no applications granted contrary to Historic England advice.

Table 43: Number of applications granted contrary to Historic England advice

2021/2022	2022/2023	2023/2024	2024/2025	2025/2026	Total
<i>No data available this year. Data will be reported in subsequent AMRs</i>					
Total					

### What Happened?:

*No data available this year. Data will be reported in subsequent AMRs*

### Comparisons:

*No data available this year. Data will be reported in subsequent AMRs*

### Implications for the Local Plan:

*No data available this year. Data will be reported in subsequent AMRs*

## Changes impacting on Historic Assets

The following table will report any nationally or locally listed assets which have been subject to works, loss, damage, redevelopment, extension or change of use over the monitoring year.

Table 44: Changes and alterations to heritage assets over the monitoring year

Name of Asset	Description of change	Reasons for change
Former Workhouse building - Administration Block at Watford General Hospital, Vicarage Road	Damage to building	Damaged by a car colliding with the building. The repair is currently being dealt with.
Watford Place, 27 King Street	Destruction of a ceiling	Destroyed during renovation work, following a fire in 2015. Subject to an ongoing enforcement case.
Little Cassiobury and former stable block, Hempstead Rd	Historic England have raised the risk category of Little Cassiobury to Priority A, their highest priority level.	Historic England assessment of the condition of the building.

The above cases highlight the importance and vulnerability of Watford's historic assets. It is crucial that over the plan period damage to, and the loss of, assets is minimised to avoid degradation of the area's historic environment. It is hoped that it will be possible to improve the condition of all three of the above cases so that they are not lost, or damaged beyond repair.

## 7.A Climate Emergency

Local Plan policies have an important role in ensuring that developments become more sustainable, environmentally friendly and consider aspects of climate change early in the application process. This section of the AMR includes indicators relating to the targets that need to be met following the Council's declaration of a Climate Emergency in 2019, as well as reporting on how new developments are transforming Watford into becoming carbon neutral.

### Watford Local Plan

The Watford Local Plan is an important tool for implementing change and improving the borough through new development and transformational change. All developments in the borough should be considering both the adaptation and mitigation aspects of climate change.

The efficient management of resources is important and policies in the Local Plan seek to improve this through a variety of requirements including energy and water efficiency, carbon reduction and offsetting, overheating, use of materials and waste management.

Air quality has historically been worsening nationally due to increased emissions largely from the use of private vehicles. Watford has two Air Quality Management Areas (AQMAs) currently in place which need to be monitored.

The Plan discusses sustainable measures and climate change in multiple sections but has one dedicated chapter 'Chapter 7: A Climate Emergency'. This chapter focuses on how to achieve a carbon neutral Watford, ensure sustainable construction, produce efficient new buildings that develop in a cumulative way and how to make use of opportunities for low carbon.

### Reducing Carbon Emissions

The Climate Change Act 2008 includes a national duty to ensure that carbon emissions in the UK in 2050 are at least 100% lower than the 1990 baseline. This covers the net amount of carbon dioxide emissions for that year and net UK emissions for each of the other targeted greenhouse gases for the year. Watford Borough Council declared a Climate Emergency in 2019 and has since prioritised the reduction of carbon among other climate and ecological improvements.

The reduction in carbon emissions is important to monitor as a way of assessing progress towards the carbon neutral target put in place by the Council as part of its declaration of a climate emergency. This information is taken from UK local authority and regional carbon dioxide emissions national statistics which publish new results every year in June. The data is however produced approximately two years after the data is collected so the most recent data available at this time is referring to data collected in 2020. The data includes exclusively carbon dioxide emissions and is measured in kilotonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent (kt CO<sub>2</sub>e).

**The 2019 baseline is 333 kt CO<sub>2</sub>e.** This is the figure against which future years data in Table 45 will be measured. The 2019 baseline reflects the year which the Council declared a Climate Emergency and committed to taking more action to reduce carbon emissions in the borough.

Table 45: The level of carbon reduction since 2019

	2021/2022	2022/2023	2023/2024	2024/2025	2025/2026	Total
Percentage of carbon reduction since 2019 (kt CO2e)	11.7%					

**What Happened?:**

Over the monitoring year there was a net decrease in carbon dioxide emissions of 11.7% when compared to the 2019 baseline. This resulted in a reduction of 39 kilotonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent from 333kt CO2e to 294 kt CO2e.

**Comparisons:**

There has been a reduction in carbon emissions since the 2019 baseline of 11.7%. This indicator will continue to monitor carbon emissions over the plan period to assess whether this is a long term trend.

As mentioned above, the way the data is published means that this indicator will always have a lag, and that data presented will always apply to a time period that is two years out of date.

**Implications for the Local Plan:**

The reduction in carbon emissions is in line with Policy CC8.1 and it is positive to see a reduction on the 2019 baseline figures. However, if this current level of decrease was maintained over the plan period it would be insufficient to achieve the Council’s target to be carbon neutral by 2030.

**BREEAM Standards**

An important method of assessing the sustainability of non-residential dwellings has been created by the British Research Establishment and is called the Environmental Assessment Method (BREEAM). This helps to ensure that non-residential developments are more energy efficient and sustainable.

BREEAM is a standardised tool used to assess sustainability measures and inform stakeholders in planning developments. There are multiple levels of BREEAM that can be achieved based on established rating systems. The Local Plan requires major non-residential developments to meet BREEAM Excellent/Very good standard and the following indicator will report the number of non-residential developments which are meeting this target.

Table 46: The number of major non-residential applications approved which are meeting BREEAM excellent or very good standard

	2021/2022	2022/2023	2023/2024	2024/2025	2025/2026	Total
Major non-residential developments which meet BREEAM excellent/very good	<i>No data available this year. Data will be reported in subsequent AMRs</i>					

**What Happened?:**

*No data available this year. Data will be reported in subsequent AMRs*

**Comparisons:**

*No data available this year. Data will be reported in subsequent AMRs*

**Implications for the Local Plan:**

*No data available this year. Data will be reported in subsequent AMRs*

### Carbon Emission Reduction Standards

Developments are required to individually meet carbon emission reduction standards above those specified in Part L of Building Regulations in 2013. The Local Plan requires a 19% increase above Part L regulations but this has since been superseded with national building regulations to require 31% above Part L 2013 standards for dwellings and 27% above for other buildings which is what will be monitored.

Table 47: Number of new residential permissions that meet carbon emission reduction standards

	2021/2022	2022/2023	2023/2024	2024/2025	2025/2026	Total
Number of new residential developments which meet carbon emission reduction standards	<i>No data available this year. Data will be reported in subsequent AMRs</i>					

**What Happened?:**

*No data available this year. Data will be reported in subsequent AMRs*

**Comparisons:**

*No data available this year. Data will be reported in subsequent AMRs*

**Implications for the Local Plan:**

During this monitoring year the national building regulations were modified to require 31% above Part L 2013 standards for dwellings and 27% for other buildings which now renders the 19% increase included in this Local Plan to be obsolete. Therefore, the information included in this area of monitoring in future years will be consistent with the higher standard set out in the building regulations rather than the Local Plan.

Water Efficiency

All residential developments should be meeting a technical standard of 110 litres per person, per day. This is particularly important in Watford as it is located within an area of high water stress.

This is a new standard with this Local Plan and will be monitored going forward to determine the level of compliance with this target.

Table 48: The number of new homes achieving water use standards

	2021/2022	2022/2023	2023/2024	2024/2025	2025/2026	Total
Number of homes achieving that water use standard of 110 litres per person per day	<i>No data available this year. Data will be reported in subsequent AMRs</i>					

**What Happened?:**

*No data available this year. Data will be reported in subsequent AMRs*



**Comparisons:**

Affinity Water are the main provider of water in Watford and their customers on average use 150 litres per person per day (Affinity Water) compared with the national average of 140 litres per person per day (Waterwise). This is the baseline against which this indicator will be considered.

**Implications for the Local Plan:**

*No data available this year. Data will be reported in subsequent AMRs*

### Air Quality Management Areas (AQMAs)

Every local authority in the UK has been assessing air quality since 1997 and locations where national objectives are not achieved become AQMAs. Currently, Watford has two AQMAs:

- Watford AQMA 2: Vicarage Road
- Watford AQMA 3A: Aldenham Road/Chalk Hill

The Council recognises the concerns around poor air quality and has reduced the number of AQMAs from 19 in 2018. The main pollutants of interest in the borough are nitrogen dioxide (NO<sub>2</sub>) and particulate matter, smaller than 10mm in size (PM<sub>10</sub>) which are both associated with road traffic. Decreases and improvements to air quality in these areas will occur through a shift to green transport options and increased mitigation measures. Improving air quality will mean less AQMAs will be needed in Watford.

Table 49: The number of AQMAs in place within Watford Borough

	2021/2022	2022/2023	2023/2024	2024/2025	2025/2026	Total
AQMAs in Watford	2					

**What Happened?:**

Watford currently has 2 AQMAs which are being monitored, Vicarage Road and Aldenham Road/Chalk Hill. This is consistent with the information reported in the last AMR from 2019.

**Comparisons:**

There has been no change in the amount of AQMAs in Watford over the monitoring year.

**Implications for the Local Plan:**

Policy CC8.4 strives to minimise the worsening effects of poor air quality and increase air quality overall. This will reduce the need for the 2 remaining AQMAs. Whilst there have been no reduction in the number of AQMAs during the monitoring year there has been no increase.

Improvements to air quality will likely be recorded over the medium to longer term and so the implications for a future Local Plan review should not be considered based on a single monitoring year.

Pollution and Disturbance

Development can negatively impact adjacent land uses and future occupants if not carefully managed. New developments need to assess their impacts on neighbouring land while taking into account its use and the possible cumulative effects in accordance with the Agent of Change principle. Management of these potential effects must be dealt with early in the planning process otherwise permissions may be refused.

Table 50: Number of applications refused on the basis of pollution or disturbance

	2021/2022	2022/2023	2023/2024	2024/2025	2025/2026	Total
Number planning permissions refused on pollution or disturbance grounds	<i>No data available this year. Data will be reported in subsequent AMRs</i>					

**What Happened?:**

*No data available this year. Data will be reported in subsequent AMRs*

**Comparisons:**

*No data available this year. Data will be reported in subsequent AMRs*

**Implications for the Local Plan:**

*No data available this year. Data will be reported in subsequent AMRs*

## 8. Natural Environment

Aspects of the natural environment such as biodiversity, flood risk and protected green spaces have been gaining attention and increasing in importance as ways to improve the natural environment in the UK. Watford recognises this and declared an ecological and climate emergency which highlight the importance of the natural environment to the borough.

Through the monitoring of any improvements to green and blue infrastructure, and requiring a net gain in biodiversity from new development, Watford hopes to strengthen and enhance its natural environment.

### Watford Local Plan

Watford is blessed by many natural environment features that are important to the residents and wildlife of the borough. The Plan seeks to improve biodiversity and protect existing open spaces and green infrastructure to ensure that the natural environment is preserved.

This section of the AMR will report any gains and losses in green infrastructure and open space within the borough, and the number of applications that include a sufficient net gain in biodiversity.

### Consistency with Environment Agency Advice

The Environment Agency (EA) have policies and advice covering a variety of topics around water quality, flooding, climate change and waste. The EA is consulted on all major development proposals and any applications on sites that have specific environmental risks. They also have authority over all major rivers in the UK, which includes the River Colne.

In Watford, the EA is largely consulted on issues of flood risk. Table 51 highlights levels of compliancy with EA advice as per the Natural Environment Policies in the Local Plan.

There is a target for there to be no applications approved contrary to EA advice on flooding or water quality grounds.

Table 51: The number of applications approved over the monitoring year that was contrary to advice from the Environment Agency

	2021/2022	2022/2023	2023/2024	2024/2025	2025/2026	Total
Number of applications granted planning permission contrary to Environment Agency advice	0					

[Environment Agency objections to planning applications based on flood risk and water quality - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/environment-agency-objections-to-planning-applications-based-on-flood-risk-and-water-quality)

**What Happened?:**

The EA did not object to any developments in the borough over the monitoring year and as such no development was granted contrary to EA advice.

**Comparisons:**

Over the 2020/2021 monitoring year the EA objected to one application in the borough, a residential development for 1 dwelling. In this case the advice from the EA was followed.

**Implications for the Local Plan:**

There were no applications granted contrary to the advice of the EA. This indicator will report these figures each year to determine whether the Local Plan policies relating to the natural environment are preventing development seen as unacceptable by the EA.

## Open Space/Green Infrastructure

Having green spaces such as parks, public gardens, play spaces, allotments and sports facilities is highly beneficial to the health and wellbeing of a community as well as having environmental benefits. Watford has a good amount of greenspace and a considerable number of high quality open spaces, but needs a more robust Green Infrastructure Network. There are a large number of areas designated in the Local Plan which protects green infrastructure and open space from development. All of the different green space typologies have been defined in the Green Spaces Strategy.

Within the newly adopted Local Plan there are 614Ha of land designated as green infrastructure or open space, ranging from large areas of regional significance like Cassiobury Park to small amenity spaces of local importance.

New developments can establish new areas of open space onsite or make off-site contributions. They can also help to enhance and improve connectivity between green spaces by creating linkages between sites. The target is to ensure that there is no net loss in open space or green infrastructure, but seeing a gain would be preferable particularly to ensure adequate provision to support new development being delivered in the borough.

Whilst future years will seek to record more of an exact net gain/loss in open space and green infrastructure, this has not been possible over this first monitoring year. This year will instead provide a summary of provision of open space and green infrastructure resulting from new development.

Table 53: Gains and losses in designated open space and green infrastructure (sqm)

	2021/2022	2022/2023	2023/2024	2024/2025	2025/2026	Total
Developments with gains to Open/Amenity space and Green Space	<i>See summary in the box below</i>					

**What Happened?:**

The data for this year is incomplete and a more comprehensive update will be provided in the next AMR. The baseline figure for this indicator is 614 hectares which is the current amount of designated open space and green infrastructure in the Local Plan. The sites making up this existing provision is shown on the policies map.

Over the monitoring year there have been multiple park improvement projects that seek to enhance the quality of open spaces in Watford.

There were nine major developments completed over the monitoring year, all of which included some form of amenity space or green infrastructure on-site.

3 of the major developments included soft landscaping across the development such as tree planting and green verges.

4 of the major developments included amenity space as part of the development.

The remaining two included amenity space/green infrastructure on the roofscape as part of a higher density development.

The Council has not recorded any loss of designated open space or green infrastructure over the monitoring year, and given the above it is reasonable to assume there has been a small net increase in green infrastructure over the monitoring year.

**Comparisons:**

As this is the first year of the new monitoring framework, and of the new Watford Local Plan, it is impossible to make comparisons for this indicator. This year will be used as a benchmark against which future AMRs will be compared

**Implications for the Local Plan:**

It is positive to see amenity space and green infrastructure being delivered as part of new development, as supported by Policy NE9.7. Access to sufficient open space is a key part of achieving sustainable development and in improving the physical and mental health and wellbeing of the residents and so it is important to monitor this indicator to ensure sufficient provision is being made.

The new Local Plan policies should strengthen the ability of the council to require sufficient amounts of open space as part of developments.

**Net gain in Biodiversity**

Watford Borough Council declared an Ecological Emergency in early 2021 and has committed to increasing existing, and providing creative new, areas of biodiversity in the borough. Any sustained loss of green infrastructure and the fracturing of its networks can have a damaging effect on habitats. The new Environment Act (2021) includes means to strengthen biodiversity and is mandating a net gain which will gradually come into effect over the coming years. Updates to this will be reported in subsequent AMRs if relevant.

Table 54: Number of applications which have delivered a net gain in Biodiversity as per the DEFRA metric

	2021/2022	2022/2023	2023/2024	2024/2025	2025/2026	Total
Biodiversity net gain as per DEFRA biodiversity metric	<i>No data available this year. Data will be reported in subsequent AMRs</i>					

**What Happened?:**

*No data available this year. Data will be reported in subsequent AMRs*

**Comparisons:**

*No data available this year. Data will be reported in subsequent AMRs*

**Implications for the Local Plan:**

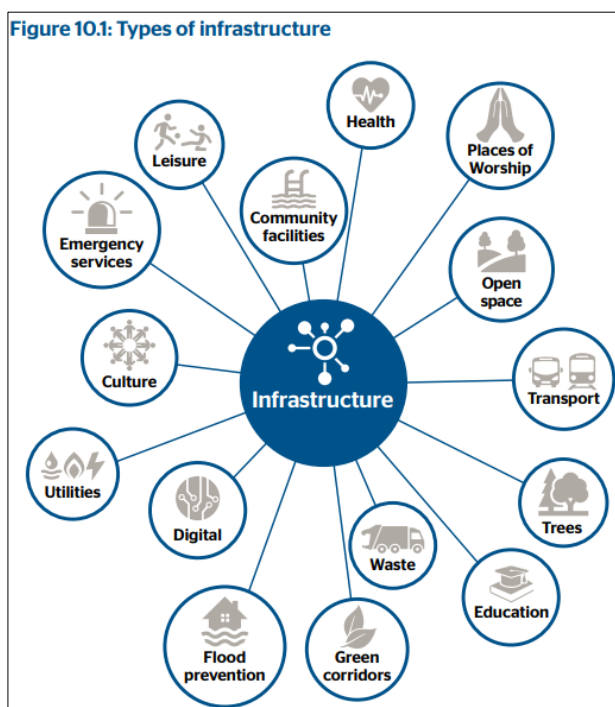
*No data available this year. Data will be reported in subsequent AMRs*

## 9. Infrastructure

New development must be supported by sufficient and appropriate infrastructure. This infrastructure falls into three categories:

- Social infrastructure: Schools, healthcare, community facilities, leisure and cultural centres, places of worship and emergency services.
- Physical infrastructure: Roads, footpaths, cycleways, water provision and treatment, sewerage, flood prevention and drainage, waste disposal, electricity, gas and electronic communications networks.
- Green Infrastructure: Open spaces, recreation facilities, trees, green corridors, wildlife corridors and landscape features.

Figure 7 below replicates Figure 10.1 of the Local Plan setting out all the different types of infrastructure that will be subject to assessment in this section of the AMR.



**Figure 7: Types of Infrastructure**

### Infrastructure Delivery Plan (IDP)

Details of the infrastructure requirements in the Local Plan to support the planned increase in new homes, businesses and other facilities are found in the IDP. The IDP identifies essential infrastructure projects and prioritises them according to their importance, as well as providing indicative costs and timescales.

The IDP includes strategic level infrastructure such as health facilities, education facilities, sustainable transport projects and communication infrastructure as well as more locally specific infrastructure projects.

Table 55 reports on the delivery of projects referenced in the IDP over the monitoring year.

**Table 55: Progress on infrastructure projects over the monitoring year**

IDP reference	Name of project	Progress 2021/22
7.4	Colne Valley Linear Park	Ongoing programme of improvements.
7.1	Transforming Travel in Watford projects	Project scoping and detailed costing.

**What Happened?:**

The Colne Valley Linear Park project is progressing. Transport projects from the Transforming Travel in Watford programme are at detailed scoping stage.

**Comparisons:**

As this is the first year of the new monitoring framework, and of the new Watford Local Plan, it is impossible to make comparisons for this indicator. This year will be used as a benchmark against which future AMRs will be compared.

**Implications for the Local Plan:**

Infrastructure provision is essential to support development. Due to the nature of scoping, costing and delivery, projects are phased over a period of several years.

It will be important to monitor the timely delivery of infrastructure projects over the plan period to ensure that new development is supported by the timely and sufficient delivery of infrastructure.

## Developer Contributions

There are various methods the Council can use to fund infrastructure projects, many of which involve securing funding through developer contributions as a way of mitigating the impacts of new development.

Developer contributions can take various forms:

- Securing appropriate on-site enabling and development works.
- Charging the Community Infrastructure Levy on developments as required by any charging schedules in operation for the area within which the development is located;
- Securing Section 106 Agreements to provide affordable housing and make provisions to mitigate the impacts of the development where necessary, or appropriate, having regard to any relevant supplementary planning documents or guidance;
- Securing off-site highway works where necessary;

The Council will primarily use Section 106 Agreements and Community Infrastructure Levy payments to secure appropriate contributions from developments for affordable housing and pieces of infrastructure, such as new schools and transport network improvements

The following indicator will report the amount of contributions secured through s106 or CIL payments over the monitoring year.



Table 56: Amount of developer contribution secured through s106 and CIL over the monitoring year (£)

Type of contribution	2021/2022 (£)	2022/2023 (£)	2023/2024 (£)	2024/2025 (£)	2025/2026 (£)	Total (£)
CIL	£1,203,484					
S106	£154,541.98					
Total (£)	£1,358,026					

### What Happened?:

Over the monitoring year £1,203,484 was secured through CIL payments towards infrastructure projects.

Watford currently has the following CIL funds available:

- Total Strategic CIL: £7,002,404
- Total Neighbourhood CIL: £1,721,590

In addition to the above CIL receipts, the Council received £154,541.98 in s106 contributions over the monitoring year. The Council spent £10,600.80 of these s106 contributions over the monitoring year.

Further detail on CIL and S106 collection and spend is reported in the council's Infrastructure Funding Statement.

### Comparisons:

The following table provides a comparison between the CIL contributions received this year compared to previous years. There has been a general upward trend in the amount of CIL contribution received since 2018 but this year has seen a reduction relative to the previous years despite the overall rate of delivery increasing.

Year	Amount collected
2015/16	£160,275
2016/17	£421,060
2017/18	£762,986
2018/19	£1,442,328
2019/20	£3,270,390
2020/21	£3,029,271
2021/22	£1,203,484

The annual delivery of CIL contributions will vary based upon the sites that are developed, existing floorspace, and affordable housing contributions. Areas around Riverwell and the Hospital, Watford Junction and Ascot Road are £0 rated and so any development in these areas will not receive any CIL contributions.

The annual delivery of CIL and any other relevant developer contributions will be reported in the Council's Infrastructure Funding Statement and summarised here over the plan period.

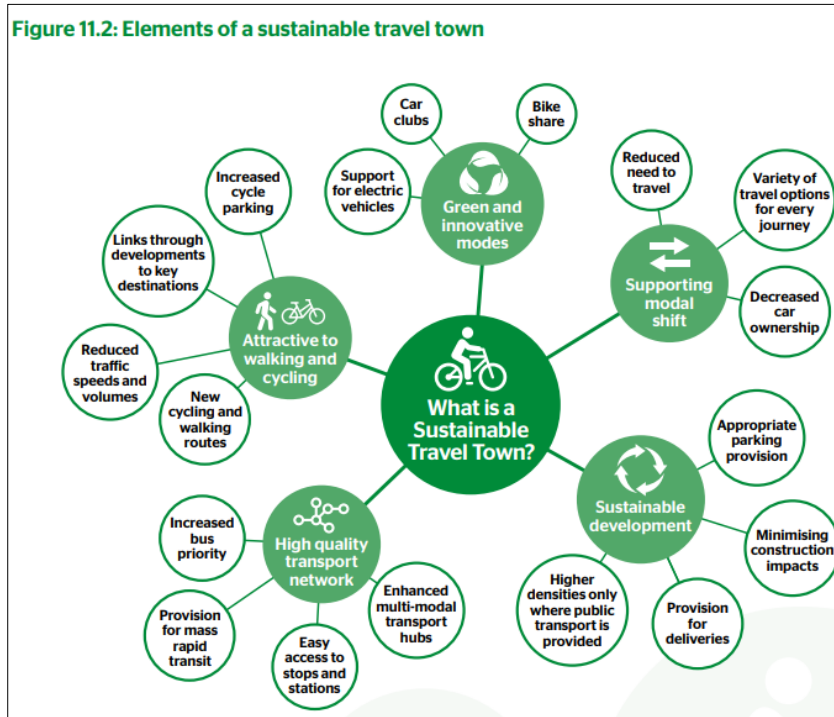
**Implications for the Local Plan:**

The collection and use of developer contributions through CIL and s106 can ensure that appropriate infrastructure comes forward to support the scale of development anticipated in the Local Plan. The delivery of infrastructure helps to ensure the delivery of sustainable development.

This indicator will highlight the availability of funds to deliver infrastructure and whether development is contributing sufficiently to the infrastructure needs of the borough.

## 10. A Sustainable Travel Town

The Council are aiming to make Watford a Sustainable Travel Town by incorporating the features in Figure 8 below, which is replicated from Figure 11.2 of the Local Plan.



**Figure 8: Elements of a Sustainable Travel Town**

Watford's compact urban form gives it significant potential to achieve these sustainable travel measures especially through encouraging and prioritising walking, cycling and public transport use rather than cars.

The conversion into a Sustainable Travel Town will involve changing the perceptions and priorities of all highway users so that cyclists and pedestrians have priority.

The majority of new development will take place within the Core Development Area, close to where there is high levels of public transport availability or there is potential to achieve this and where key services and facilities will be accessible by walking and cycling.

### Sustainable Travel Town

Policy ST11.1 sets out the criteria and principles that development should meet when contributing towards promoting sustainable and active travel behaviour. Proximity to sustainable transport options is a key part of creating a Sustainable Travel Town.

As such this indicator assesses the amount of new residential development that is located within walking distance (400m) of an active bus stop or train station and therefore provides easy and convenient access to sustainable transport options.

Note that this is worked out using a 400m buffer zone around each site. It does not take into account any physical or environmental barriers that may impact on the distance or journey time in reality.

Table 57: % of new residential development that is located within 400m of a bus stop or railway station

	2021/2022	2022/2023	2023/2024	2024/2025	2025/2026	Total
% of new development within 400m of a bus stop	100%					
% of new development within 400m of a railway station	29%					

**What Happened?:**

All of the 754 net residential units completed over the monitoring year were within 400m of a bus stop.

29% of net residential completions were within 400m of one of the six railway stations located within Watford Borough<sup>2</sup>.

This data considers the distance from these sustainable transport options ‘as the crow flies’. It takes no account of any physical or environmental barriers affecting the walking or cycling route to them in reality.

**Comparisons:**

As this is the first year of the new monitoring framework, and of the new Watford Local Plan, it is impossible to make comparisons for this indicator. This year will be used as a benchmark against which future AMRs will be compared.

**Implications for the Local Plan:**

It is positive to see that all new residential development delivered in the borough provides opportunities for public transport use through having walkable access to a bus stop. This should help new development contribute effectively towards modal shift and encourage more sustainable transport usage across the borough.

It is likely that the allocating of sites within the Core Development Area will increase the proportion of new development located within 400m of a railway station over the plan period.

<sup>2</sup> Note that this includes Watford Underground station on the Metropolitan Line.

## Safeguarded Transport Routes

Policy ST11.2 of the Local Plan safeguards several transport routes (listed in Table 58) for incorporation into future mass transit, bus prioritisation or walking and cycling routes.

These are safeguarded to ensure that designs do not compromise the prioritisation of public transport or active travel now or in the future.

The Policy also safeguards the role of Watford Junction as a multi modal hub, preventing development that would hinder the provision of key infrastructure that would support this.

This indicator will report any changes or updates in relation to these safeguarded routes that have taken place over the monitoring year.

Table 58: Annual updates on safeguarded transport routes

Safeguarded routes	2021/2022- Any updates
Disused Croxley Rail Line	None
Ebury Way cycle path	None
Abbey Line	None
Existing and Planned cycle routes in the Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan	None
Any future planned mass rapid transport routes identified by the county council	None
Watford Junction	None

### What Happened?:

There were no updates to any of the safeguarded transport routes over the monitoring year.

### Implications for the Local Plan:

There were no updates during this monitoring year and so there are no immediate implications for the Local Plan.

## Walking and Cycling Infrastructure

Policy ST11.4 states that developments need to demonstrate that they have sought to prioritise walking and cycling through the delivery of on-site infrastructure, wayfinding measures and a safe and secure design. The overall objective of the Plan is to reduce car use by increasing the convenience and attractiveness of walking and cycling.

Appendix D of the Local Plan sets out the standards for on-site cycle parking that all new development will be expected to meet.

Table 59 will report the number of applications that have been approved with levels of cycling parking provision in accordance with Appendix D of the Local Plan.

Table 59: Number of applications with policy compliant cycle parking provisions

	2021/2022	2022/2023	2023/2024	2024/2025	2025/2026	Total
Number of applications with policy compliant cycle parking	<i>No data available this year. Data will be reported in subsequent AMRs</i>					
% of all new development with policy compliant cycle parking	<i>No data available this year. Data will be reported in subsequent AMRs</i>					

**What Happened?:**

*No data available this year. Data will be reported in subsequent AMRs*

**Comparisons:**

*No data available this year. Data will be reported in subsequent AMRs*

**Implications for the Local Plan:**

*No data available this year. Data will be reported in subsequent AMRs*

Sustainable Transport Usage in Watford

Hertfordshire County Council produce a travel survey every 3 years, which provides data on how many people are walking and cycling for their main mode of transport, compared to car use. Table 60 records the latest results of this survey. The objective is to increase the percentage of people mainly using cycling or walking over the plan period. The data in this year’s AMR comes from the Hertfordshire County Council (HCC) Travel Survey published in December 2022.

Table 60: The % of people walking or cycling for their main mode of transport

	2021/2022	2022/2023	2023/2024	2024/2025	2025/2026	Total
% of people walking for main transport	32%					
% of people cycling for transport	3.7%					

**What Happened?:**

32% of people use walking as their main method of transport in Watford, and 3.7% of people use cycling as their main method of transport. This data is taken from the 2022 HCC travel survey published in December 2022.

**Comparisons:**

There was no comparable data in the previously published 2020 HCC travel survey and so it is not possible to make comparisons between this year and last for this indicator.

In comparison with other districts in Hertfordshire this year however, Watford has the highest levels of walking and cycling recorded as being the main method of transport.

In comparison to car use, the use of cars is still marginally higher than walking in Watford with 35.5% of people using cars as their main method of transport compared to 32% walking.

**Implications for the Local Plan:**

Achieving significant modal shifts in transport will likely take time to occur across the plan period, but it is encouraging to see Watford’s position relative to the rest of Hertfordshire regarding the use of walking and cycling as the main form of transport.

The locating of 80% of new residential and mixed use allocations within the Core Development Area should increase the attractiveness and viability of walking and cycling as a main transport option. In trying to increase walking and cycling, it will also be important to provide safe and accessible routes to and from key locations, and good quality infrastructure such as cycle parking opportunities, particularly in the town centre and at major transport hubs.

**Electric Vehicle Ownership and Infrastructure**

Policy ST11.5 supports the increased provision of electric vehicle charging infrastructure. 20% of all new parking spaces should have active charging infrastructure and all spaces should have passive provision. The provision of electric charging infrastructure should make electric vehicles a more viable option for a wider range of people and should drive up levels of ownership in the borough.

Standard car parking should be provided in accordance with Appendix E of the Local Plan with all development in the Core Development Area being car-lite.

The following indicators seek to track the level of electric vehicle ownership in the borough as a percentage of total car ownership, the number of new electric charging infrastructure being delivered and lastly the level of car ownership generally across the borough.

Table 61: Ownership of electric vehicles as a % of total car ownership

	2021/2022	2022/2023	2023/2024	2024/2025	2025/2026	Total
Number of electric vehicles registered in Watford 2021/22	2,125					
% of all car registrations in the borough that are electric.	4%					

[Vehicle licensing statistics data tables - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/vehicle-licensing-statistics-data-tables)

#### What Happened?:

There were 2,125 electric or ultra-low emission vehicles registered over the monitoring year and there have been 5,935 private electric vehicle registrations since 2013. This past year appears to represent a significant uplift in ownership of ultra-low emission vehicles.

It will be interesting to continually assess this to see if this is a trend that continues.

In total there were 50,200 vehicles registered in Watford at the end of the 2021/2022 monitoring year, the addition of 2,125 electric vehicle registrations equates to 4% of all registrations.

#### Comparisons:

Over the 2020/2021 monitoring year, there were 1,289 electric or ultra-low emission vehicle registrations in the borough and so there has been a significant increase relative to this in the current monitoring year.

In terms of comparing the ownership of electric vehicles against the total number of registered vehicles in the borough, the overall number of registrations at the end of the 2021/2022 monitoring year was 50,200.

The above table shows that the electric vehicle registrations for this monitoring year (2,125) would represent 4% of the total vehicle registration figure. Taking into account the registration of electric vehicles back to 2013 of 5,935 this would equate to nearly 12% of all registrations. It is noted however that these figures do not include de-registrations and so the actual figures are likely to be lower in reality.



### Implications for the Local Plan:

This indicator will seek to assess the demand for electric vehicles in Watford and in turn provide evidence as to whether there is more demand for electric vehicle infrastructure in the borough that could be given further encouragement in Local Plan policy.

Table 62: Electric vehicle charging spaces delivered over the monitoring year

	2021/2022	2022/2023	2023/2024	2024/2025	2025/2026	Total
Number of electric vehicle charging spaces delivered on new developments in Watford	95					
Number of electric vehicle charging spaces provided by the Council	34					

### What Happened?:

There were a total of 95 electric vehicle spaces delivered on new development sites over the monitoring year.

These were provided on the following applications:

Application Ref.	No.of spaces
21/00698/FULM	17
21/00971/FULM	6
21/00785/FUL	5
19/00778/FULM	16
20/01188/FULM	10
21/01605/VARM	17
21/01316/NONMAT	16
21/01721/FUL	8

In addition to spaces delivered as a result of new development there were 34 additional charging points delivered through the Councils Electric Vehicle charging scheme. These were made up of 18 new on street charging points and 16 conversions of existing charging points into trio charging points resulting in an additional third charging socket for residents to use.

It is positive to see electric vehicle spaces being delivered in the borough.

**Comparisons:**

As this is the first year of the new monitoring framework, and of the new Watford Local Plan, it is impossible to make comparisons for this indicator. This year will be used as a benchmark against which future AMRs will be compared.

**Implications for the Local Plan:**

It will be important that the Local Plan policies allow the demand for electric vehicle charging to be supported by sufficient charging infrastructure.

The above indicators relating to electric vehicle registrations will be used to give an indication of demand and this indicator should provide a useful measure of the extent to which this need is being met on new development sites and in the borough generally. The requirement in Building Regulations to provide active and passive electric charging infrastructure should increase the proportion of new development that includes electric vehicle spaces.

## Car Ownership

The policies in the Plan seek to move people towards more active travel and away from using private cars. The locating of the majority of development within the Core Development Area should enable people to choose to live in Watford and not own a private vehicle because there will be ready access to services, facilities and public transport by walking and cycling.

This indicator will assess the level of car ownership in Watford, allowing the Council to assess whether there may be a reduction due to the policies in the Plan and the increased viability and attractiveness of active travel.

In the 2011 Census, there were 44,028 cars owned in Watford, meaning a ownership rate of 68% of all residents. It is expected that this data is to be updated over the next monitoring year as more data from the 2021 Census is released. Updates will be reported in the next AMR if available.

The 2022 Hertfordshire County Council travel survey reports that in Watford there are 1.18 cars per household, this is the lowest number in Hertfordshire reflecting Watford's location relative to good quality public transport options, and its provision of services and facilities accessible by walking or cycling. Watford also had the highest level of non-car ownership Hertfordshire with 18.9% of people not owning cars.

**What Happened?:**

There were 44,028 cars owned in Watford according to the 2011 Census. This represents a proportion of 68% of all residents in Watford. The 2021 Census data is being published in stages over the coming year so it is likely that updated data will be available next year.

The recently published HCC travel survey highlighted that there are 1.18 cars per household in Watford which is the lowest level in Hertfordshire and that Watford had the highest level of non-car ownership in Hertfordshire with 18.9% not owning a car.

#### **Comparisons:**

The data on total car ownership is from the 2011 Census and so there is no comparison to be made with previous years. When the new 2021 Census data is released this indicator will compare the difference between 2011 and 2021 with regard to car ownership.

As mentioned above, Watford has comparatively low car ownership compared to neighbouring districts in Hertfordshire.

#### **Implications for the Local Plan:**

The Local Plan seeks to make Watford a 'Sustainable Travel Town', directing the majority of growth towards the most sustainable locations close to services, facilities and public transport and prioritising the needs of active transport (pedestrians, cyclists and public transport) over cars.

The Plan supports development that is 'car-lite' or 'car-free' within the Core Development Area. It will be interesting to assess whether this has an impact on levels of car ownership over the plan period. It is anticipated that the need for cars as part of new development in the borough will reduce as new infrastructure initiatives to support active transport are delivered.

Reducing the level of reliance on private car ownership could provide opportunities for more pedestrianisation schemes and reducing road widths where appropriate could contribute towards making Watford more pedestrian friendly and reducing the perceived priority of cars in the town.

## Travel Plans

Travel plans are required to support a planning application in all cases where a transport assessment would be required and where local circumstances set out in the Hertfordshire County Council Travel Plan Guidance document dictate that one is required. The Travel Plan should encourage sustainable travel behaviour and should include clear objectives and measures to achieve it.

The following indicator records the number and percentage of applications which include a travel plan that was submitted as a supporting document, either in a standalone format or within another, larger document such as the Design and Access Statement.

Table 63: % of applications that include a Travel Plan

	2021/2022	2022/2023	2023/2024	2024/2025	2025/2026	Total
Number of applications including a Travel Plan	<i>No data available this year. Data will be reported in subsequent AMRs</i>					
% of all applications that include a Travel Plan	<i>No data available this year. Data will be reported in subsequent AMRs</i>					

**What Happened?:**

*No data available this year. Data will be reported in subsequent AMRs*

**Comparisons:**

*No data available this year. Data will be reported in subsequent AMRs*

**Implications for the Local Plan:**

*No data available this year. Data will be reported in subsequent AMRs*

# 11. A Healthy Community

The design of new development and the provision of suitable outdoor spaces can have a significant effect on people’s health and wellbeing. The Local Plan seeks to create a healthy, active population by ensuring access to open spaces, creating pedestrian and cycle friendly environments, limiting pollution, providing homes to meet the needs of specific sections of society such as older residents and supporting well located and good quality community facilities.

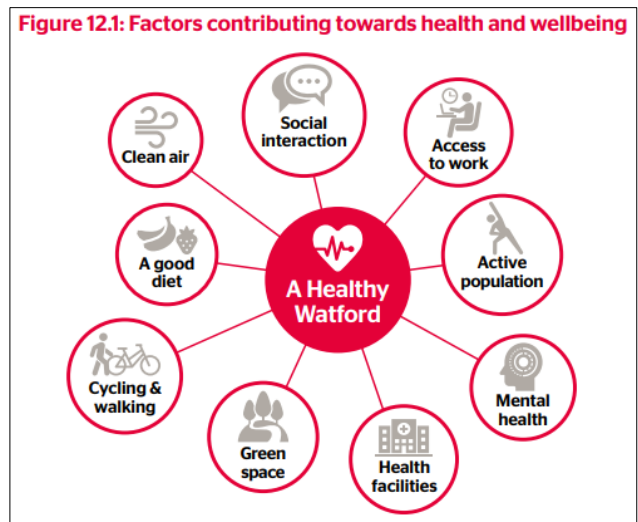
Figure 12.1 of the Local Plan is replicated below highlighting the factors that can contribute towards health and wellbeing. Many of these factors are reported on in other sections of this AMR.

Figure 9: Factors contributing towards health and wellbeing

## Health Impact Assessments

The Local Plan seeks to ensure that development does not have a detrimental impact on the health of a population or health inequalities.

A Health Impact Assessment (HIA) is essential to demonstrate that a proposal would not have a negative impact on physical health or mental wellbeing.



Health Impact Assessments are a tool through which development can:

- Understand local community health needs and demonstrate how it can support these;
- Demonstrate how it has considered health inequalities;
- Meet the requirements of the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Regulations for human health;
- Meets the policy requirements of the Watford Local Plan that major development proposals undertake a Health Impact Assessment;
- Demonstrate the opportunities of a proposal and how a development has been positively planned.

Policy HC12.2 sets out what type of applications require a HIA to be completed, these are;

- Major residential developments of 100 units or more
- Major transport infrastructure
- Any other locally or nationally significant infrastructure project

Table 64 records the number of HIAs completed on relevant schemes over the monitoring year.

Table 64: Number of HIAs completed for new applications over the monitoring year

Type of development	2021/2022	2022/2023	2023/2024	2024/2025	2025/2026	Total
Residential development over 100 dwellings	<i>No data available this year. Data will be reported in subsequent AMRs</i>					
Major transport infrastructure improvements	<i>No data available this year. Data will be reported in subsequent AMRs</i>					
Any other locally or nationally significant infrastructure	<i>No data available this year. Data will be reported in subsequent AMRs</i>					
Total						

**What Happened?:**

*No data available this year. Data will be reported in subsequent AMRs*

**Comparisons:**

*No data available this year. Data will be reported in subsequent AMRs*

**Implications for the Local Plan:**

*No data available this year. Data will be reported in subsequent AMRs*

## New Community Facilities

Facilities providing opportunities for leisure, recreation, sport and tourism are vital for the health and wellbeing of a population. These facilities should be located close to where people live and in the heart of communities.

Built cultural or community facilities can include education and health facilities, public houses, local places of worship, community centres, public halls, leisure and sports centres, or arts buildings.

Policy HC12.3 support the delivery of new, extended or improved cultural and community facilities, where they are located in sustainable and accessible locations and where they do not conflict with existing uses. The Policy resists the loss of existing facilities unless it is demonstrated that the facility is no longer needed; it is being provided to a higher quality; and that the facility has been vacant for 12 months with clear marketing evidence showing it could not have any community use.

Table 65 reports on the provision of new, and the loss of existing, community facilities. There is a target of no net loss of community facilities over the plan period.

Table 65: New community facilities delivered over the monitoring year

Type of Facility	Location/Name of facility
None	

### What Happened?:

There were no new community facilities delivered over the monitoring year.

### Comparisons:

As this is the first year of the new monitoring framework, and of the new Watford Local Plan, it is impossible to make comparisons for this indicator. This year will be used as a benchmark against which future AMRs will be compared.

### Implications for the Local Plan:

There is no set target for the delivery of community facilities in the borough over the plan period, other than there being no net loss, but it is important that provision is supported when it comes forward. It is likely that most of the community facilities delivered over the plan period will be linked to new development.

## Loss of Community Facilities

This indicator reports on any community facilities that have been lost over the monitoring year and gives a reason as to why the facility was lost with reference to the criteria in Policy HC12.3 (e.g. replacement facility being provided, vacant for over 12 months, not needed by the community).

Table 66: Number of community facilities lost over the monitoring year

Type of Facility	Location/Name of facility	Reasons for loss
None		

### What Happened?:

There were no community facilities lost over the monitoring year.

### Comparisons:

As this is the first year of the new monitoring framework, and of the new Watford Local Plan, it is impossible to make comparisons for this indicator. This year will be used as a benchmark against which future AMRs will be compared.

### Implications for the Local Plan:

The protection of community facilities is supported by Policy HC12.3 and as such the recording of no net loss of community facilities over the monitoring year is positive.

This indicator will help to demonstrate whether the policy is effective in protecting community facilities.



## 12. Site Allocations

The Local Plan includes a variety of site allocations incorporating residential, mixed use, employment and education allocations. In total, these allocations are expected to deliver 8,604 homes over the plan period and so represent a critical element of meeting the target for 13,328 over the plan period and 784 dwellings per annum. This section of the AMR monitors progress on each of these allocated sites over the monitoring year.

Figure 13.1: Allocated sites for delivery

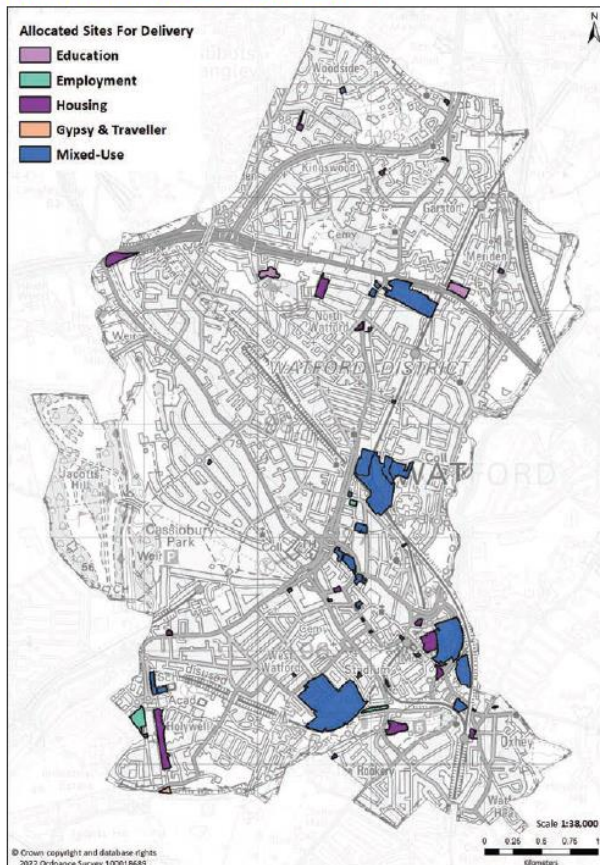


Figure 10: Allocated sites in the Local Plan

Figure 10 replicated from Figure 13.1 of the Local Plan provides a map of all allocated sites in the Local Plan.

### Residential Site Allocations

There are a total of 32 purely residential site allocations in the Plan. Table 67 reports any planning or delivery updates that have been reported over the monitoring year.

Table 67: Progress on residential site allocations over the monitoring year (MY)

Reference/Name	Yield	Progress/Updates over MY
HS01- Lych Gate	5	Planning permission granted for this site (21/00304/FUL) over the monitoring year
HS02- 275 Sheepcot Lane	21	
HS03- 1 Lavinia Avenue	5	
HS04- 5 Sheepcot Drive	9	
HS05- Land at Badger PH	9	

HS06- Land at Russell Lane	93	
HS07- Former Mothercare site	98	Prior Approval granted (21/00455/AAPA) for 44 dwellings. Developers on-site.
HS08- Longspring Car Park	17	
HS09- Land and Buildings at 420-420a St Albans Road	9	
HS10- Land at Balmoral Road	5	
HS11- Land to the Rear of 53 Langley Way	7	
HS12- Land and Garages between 139-149 Queens Road	5	
HS13- Corner of Park Avenue and Rickmansworth Road	9	
HS14- Land at 14-20 Upton Road	48	
HS15- Land at 80 Cassio Road	17	
HS16- Land and Buildings at 176-186 Rickmansworth Road	12	
HS17- 120-122 Exchange Road	5	
HS18- Car Park at Vicarage Road/Exchange Road	5	
HS19- Crown Passage Car Park	18	
HS20- Land at Lower Derby Road	59	Feasibility study has been completed jointly between Watford Borough Council and Hertfordshire County Council
HS21- Land at Waterfields Retail Park	414	
HS22- Land and Buildings at 252-272 Lower High Street	110	
HS23- Land and Buildings at 247 Lower High Street	31	
HS24- Land and Garages between 41 and 61 Brightwell Road	4	
HS25- Land and Garages to the rear of 15-17 Liverpool Road	11	
HS26- Land and Garages to the rear of Elfrida Road	8	
HS27- Land at Croxley View	240	Development (19/00413/FULM) has commenced for the delivery of 86 units in initial phase.
HS28- Wiggshall Depot	330	
HS29- 41 Aldenham Road	5	
HS30- Chalk Hill Car Park	9	
HS31- Land at Bushey Station	68	
HS32- Riverside Road and Garages	5	Site completed over the monitoring year (20/00413/FUL for 5 residential units

**What Happened?:**

Delivery was reported on two allocated housing sites over the monitoring year, with a further site having developers on-site without reporting any completions over the monitoring year.

Several other updates are provided with regard to sites progressing through the planning system.

**Comparisons:**

As this is the first year of the plan period it would be unlikely to see a large number of site allocations already delivering.

It will be vital to assess how sites are progressing over the coming years to ensure that delivery remains aligned to the housing trajectory in Appendix B of the Local Plan.

**Implications for the Local Plan:**

The delivery of housing is crucial in maintaining a five year housing supply, and in passing the Housing Delivery Test, and therefore ensuring that the policies in the Plan remain up to date and be given full weight by Planning Inspectors at appeals.

The delivery of residential site allocations will be an important part of ensuring that housing needs are met.

### Mixed-Use Housing Allocations

Alongside the above residential allocations there are a variety of mixed use allocations incorporating residential and employment or E class uses.

Table 68 provides any planning or delivery updates that have been reported over the monitoring year.

Table 68: Progress on mixed use site allocations over the monitoring year (MY)

Reference/Name	Yield	Progress/Updates over MY
MU01- Land at Woodside Community Centre	12	
MU02- Land at 501 St Albans Road	13	
MU03- Land at the Lemarie Centre	7	
MU04- 453 St Albans Road	18	
MU05- Land and Buildings at 94-98 St Albans Road	1214	Has an extant planning permission (19/00507/FULM) and development has commenced but completions have not yet been reported.

MU06- Land at Watford Junction	1232	
MU07- Land and Buildings at Astral House	131	
MU08- 22-28 Station Road	21	Half the site (26-28 Station Road) has permission for 9 dwellings.
MU09- Land at Watford Police Station	120	Consent granted for the Police to relocate to a new office.
MU10- Land at the Rear of 125-127 The Parade	90	
MU11- 23-37 The Parade	72	
MU12- 19-21 Clarendon Road	14	Live planning application (21/01811/FULM) for 65 units which is going to development committee in the summer.
MU13- Land at Sainsbury's Town Centre	220	
MU14- Land at the Car Park, Wellstones	40	
MU15- 18 Watford Field Road	19	
MU16- Land at Tesco, Lower High Street	1338	
MU17- Land at Colne Valley Retail Park	466	
MU18- Land to the West of and Parallel to Ascot Road	43	
MU19- Land East of Ascot Road	27	
MU20- Land at Riverwell	1383	Partially permissioned- 571 units on existing planning consents to be delivered before 2026  17/015111/FULM- 408 residential dwellings; 17/01543/FULM- 253 residential care home; 19/00778/FULM- 192 residential units; 18/01383/FULM- Car Park; 21/00765/OUTM- Hospital.
MU21- Land at Colne Bridge Retail Park	141	
MU22- Land at Asda, Dome Roundabout	422	
MU23- Land at Colonial Way/Clive Way	8,215sqm of industrial floorspace	Has planning consent but not started

**What Happened?:**

Several mixed use sites currently have applications granted permission, or are progressing towards getting an application submitted.

**Comparisons:**

As this is the first year of the plan period it would be unlikely to see a large number of site allocations already delivering. It will be vital to assess how sites are progressing over the coming years to ensure that delivery remains aligned with the housing trajectory in Appendix B of the Local Plan.

**Implications for the Local Plan:**

The delivery of housing is crucial in maintaining a five year housing supply, and in passing the Housing Delivery Test, and therefore ensuring that the policies in the Plan remain up to date and given full weight by Planning Inspectors at appeals.

The delivery of mixed use site allocations will be an important part of ensuring that housing needs are met.

## Employment Site Allocations

Table 13.3 of the Local Plan allocates several sites for employment uses.

Delivery of these sites will be crucial to ensuring that the needs for both office and industrial floorspace will be met. The below table will report any updates over the monitoring year.

Table 69: Progress on employment allocations over the monitoring year (MY)

Reference/Name	Uses	Progress/Updates over MY
EM01- Cassiobury House, 11-19 Station Road	Office	Has planning consent but not started
EM02- South of Wiggshall Industrial Estate	Industrial	
EM03- Gateway Zone	Industrial	Has planning consent and the site has been cleared
EM04- Land between 14-18 Greenhill Crescent	Industrial	

**What Happened?:**

There was no delivery or permissions granted on employment allocations over the monitoring year although three out of the five allocated sites have extant permission.

**Comparisons:**

As this is the first year of the plan period it would be unlikely to see a large number of site allocations already delivering but it is notable to see a high proportion of sites with extant permission.

**Implications for the Local Plan:**

This indicator will assess the delivery of employment floorspace in the borough which will allow the Council to see how these key employment sites are coming forward and whether they are able to provide job opportunities for local people.

### Education Site Allocations

The delivery of sufficient education facilities to support the level of new development expected in the area is crucial to achieving sustainable development and providing essential infrastructure to meet needs. Table 13.4 of the Local Plan, therefore, allocates two sites as being suitable for a new education facility.

Table 70 below will report any updates and progress on these two sites over the plan period.

Table 70: Progress on education allocations over the monitoring year (MY)

Reference/Name	Uses	Progress/Updates over MY
ED01- Former Meriden School Site	Education	
ED02- Former Bill Everett Centre	Education	

**What Happened?:**

There was no delivery or permissions granted on education allocations over the monitoring year.

**Comparisons:**

As this is the first year of the plan period it would be unlikely to see a large number of site allocations already delivering.

**Implications for the Local Plan:**

It is important that education facilities are delivered alongside housing growth in the borough to ensure that there are sufficient school places to cater for an increased population. The delivery of these two sites is therefore critical to achieving sustainable development over the plan period.



# Agenda Item 7

**Report to:** *Cabinet*

**Date of meeting:** *13 March 2023*

**Report author:** *Associate Director of Customer and Corporate Service, EPMO  
Coordinator, Executive Head of Human Resources and Business  
Intelligence Manager*

**Report sponsor:** *Associate Director of Customer and Corporate Service*

**Portfolio holder:** *Councillor Mark Watkin*

**Report title:** *Focusing on delivery:  
Council Delivery Plan 2022-24 Quarter 3 Update  
Organisational Development Strategy 2020-24 Quarter 3 Update  
Council Performance 2022-23 Quarter 3 Update*

**Nature of report:** *For information and noting*

## **1.0 Executive Summary**

1.1 Following the Mayoral election in May 2022, Watford Borough Council launched its new Council Plan in June 2022 which sets out an ambitious agenda for the town and the council. The Council Plan forms part of the organisation's strategic framework, which aims to ensure that the council delivers on its commitments. Underpinning the Council Plan is a two-year Delivery Plan and our Organisational Development Strategy, which are both supported by a suite of key performance indicators (KPIs). This allows the council to ensure that both projects and high quality services continue to be delivered, and for action to be taken if areas of concern are identified. A critical part of this approach is regular reporting of the key elements of the council's strategic framework and day to day performance. This report, therefore, contains updates comprising:

- the Council Plan 2022-26 and Delivery Plan 2022-24;
- the Organisational Development Strategy 2020-24; and
- key performance indicators.

1.2 The updates reflect the positive outcomes that have been achieved over quarter 3 of 2022/23 through strengthening the council's strategic framework and establishing a clear focus for the organisation, including aligning existing KPIs to our Council Plan themes. This has enabled services to concentrate on what is important to the town and council.



The progress achieved since the last update to Cabinet is shown in the updates appended to this report (Appendices A, B and C).

- 1.3 The successful delivery of the commitments in the Council Plan 2022-26 is critical to ensuring we remain focused on what is important to Watford and we are seen by our community as an organisation that delivers on its promises. As such, the council has committed to reporting on progress against the Council Delivery Plan, Organisational Development Strategy and Key Performance Indicators on a quarterly basis. This report forms the third of these updates since the approval of the new Council Plan.
- 1.4 As part of our drive for continuous improvement, a review of the council's key performance indicators is underway across the organisation, intended to align with the council's new management structure and ensure that the council continues to challenge itself to deliver excellent services to residents, businesses and the community. Discussions with Portfolio Holders on future KPIs are proposed to take place over the next period which will allow the new key performance indicators to be reported upon from quarter 1 of the 2023/2024 financial year.

## **2.0 Recommendations**

It is recommended that Cabinet note:

- 2.1 The progress updates within this report relating to:
  - the Council Plan 2022-26 and Delivery Plan 2022 -24 (Appendix A)
  - the Organisational Development Strategy 2020-24 (Appendix B)
  - the key performance indicator results for Quarter 3 of 2022/23 (Appendix C)
- 2.2 That the key performance indicators and measures will continue to be reviewed as part of the council-wide service planning process and the ongoing work on the Business Intelligence Strategy, and that these will be discussed with Portfolio Holders over the next period for their views.
- 2.3 That the report will be presented to Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 15 March 2023.

## **3.0 Decision Pathway**

- 3.1 Next decision-making body: Not applicable

**3.1.1** Indicative date: Not applicable

**3.2** Final decision-making body: Cabinet

**3.2.1** Indicative date: 13 March 2023

**Contact Officer:**

For further info please contact: Liam Hornsby, Associate Director of  
Customer and Corporate Services

Email: [liam.hornsby@watford.gov.uk](mailto:liam.hornsby@watford.gov.uk)

Reviewed and signed off by: Kathryn Robson, Director of Performance

**4.0 Detailed Proposal**

**4.1 A refreshed strategic framework**

4.1.1 The council has an ambitious agenda for Watford and recognises that a focused, and aligned, strategic framework is fundamental to the successful delivery of its plans for the town.

4.1.2 Following the Mayoral election in May 2022, the council reviewed and refreshed its strategic framework to better reflect these ambitions as well as the Mayor's Manifesto, local intelligence, community feedback and best practice. The renewed framework, comprising the council's key strategies and plans, confirms our focus on what is important to the town and its residents and that resources are allocated to its priority commitments.

4.1.3 A critical part of the successful delivery of the renewed framework is robust, and regular, monitoring and reporting of the associated plans including:

- the Council Plan 2022-26 and Delivery Plan 2022-24;
- the Organisational Development Strategy 2020-24 and Delivery Plan; and
- key performance indicators.

This report presents a progress update of the plans outlined in 4.4 and in associated Appendices (A, B and C).

4.1.4 A significant amount of progress has been achieved across all delivery areas. The direction set by the strategic framework has ensured services have clarity on where they need to concentrate, focus their energies and support the council's reputation as a council that gets things done and that delivers on what is important to the town.

4.1.5 Running throughout the council's progress is the strengthening of our organisational approach, governance and structure. This means the council has the essential building blocks in place to support all of our activities and commitments not just across these plans but also across all of our corporate work and effort. This has particularly focused on:

- making sure we have the right capacity to deliver, particularly at the senior level of the organisation;
- a renewed emphasis on integrating how we work strategically;
- making sure the way we make our decisions is transparent, timely and supported by the relevant information; and
- our organisational culture is directed to our 'one team' approach, shared ownership of our corporate priorities and commitment to deliver

4.1.6 Both plans are underpinned by a suite of key performance indicators, which are currently under review and which will be finalised for use in advance of April 2023.

## **4.2 Council Plan 2020-24 and Delivery Plan 2020-22**

4.2.1 The new Council Plan 2022-26 was approved by Council in June 2022 as was the associated Delivery Plan 2022-24.

4.2.2 The Council Plan is designed to be strategic, high level and outward-facing, with an emphasis on outcome focused commitments based around four key themes:

- A greener, brighter future
- An inspiring, thriving and creative town
- A diverse happy and healthy town
- A council working for our community and serving our residents

Each theme has a number of areas of commitment under which specific projects and areas of work have been identified and articulated through the Delivery Plan 2022-24.

4.2.3 Whilst the Council Plan has a four-year perspective, the Delivery Plan has been developed to focus on key priorities to 2024. The 18-month perspective means that the Council can benefit from the approach deployed during its Covid-19 response and remain flexible and agile to

respond to emerging and future challenges and opportunities over the life of the Council Plan.

4.2.4 By reporting regularly to Cabinet and Overview and Scrutiny Committee on the progress made by the organisation against the Council Plan and, particularly the Delivery Plan, we can ensure we are continuing to focus our resources on what is important to our town and community. It also provides transparency and clear accountability to our community.

4.2.5 The full report can be seen an Appendix A but some key highlights, by Council Plan theme are included below:

#### **A greener brighter future**

- In line with our commitment to sustainable transport, work with a number of Watford schools to develop and improve their School Travel Plan (STP) which will enable them to be provided with cycle parking is underway.
- Following the Tree Nominations initiative held in the summer, tree planting is now underway, with additional funds for whip replacement also secured.
- The 'Tales of the River' project, funded by a successful £246.7k bid to the National Heritage Lottery Fund has been initiated and will help to promote the value of the River to our town.
- A Supplementary Planning Document for developers on how they can contribute to enhancing biodiversity across the town has been developed. The SPD is expected to be adopted later in the year following consultation.
- The consultation on Watford's draft Environmental Strategy 2023-30, addressing the climate and ecological emergency, ended in December 2022. 679 responses were received across various media, all generally positive with 'net zero' being the most engaged topic. Formal endorsement of the Strategy at Cabinet is expected in March 2023.

#### **An inspiring, thriving and creative town**

- The government approved Watford's UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) investment plan in December 2022 and year 1 funding allocation has been received.
- Our place brand and narrative has been developed to build on the initial concepts. An associated implementation and resourcing plan is being developed alongside the creative content to ensure successful rollout.

- In November 2022, Mace Develop were selected as our preferred joint venture partner to help deliver our ambition to revitalise the north end of the High Street and around the Town Hall.
- Work is continuing on the refurbishment of Watford Colosseum with the decarbonisation works now almost complete.
- The Town Centre Strategic Framework consultation is now complete will be presented to Cabinet in March 2023 for final sign off.
- The 'Shop and Eat Local' campaign was brought forward to coincide with the festive period. The council is continuing to engage with new businesses and encouraging local people to nominate businesses to be promoted locally.
- Following inspection and amendments, the Local Plan has now been adopted by the council and provides the council with the opportunity to influence local and sustainable development across the town.

#### **A diverse, happy and healthy town**

- The council remain committed to investment in Woodside and the updated scheme and multi-million pound investment was approved by Cabinet in January 2023. It will include renovating the buildings to provide energy efficient facilities for cricket, football, and boxing for all ages, as well as spaces for shared community use. There will also be modern and accessible changing rooms for clubs already based there – including Watford Town Cricket Club, the junior and adult football clubs and Watford Amateur Boxing Club.
- In recognition of Watford's 100 years as a borough, a successful flag flying exercise with local schools was held, 100-year old residents were recognised and a community led centenary service was held on Centenary Day. The end of year 100-year celebration exhibition was held at Watford Museum. We continue to recognise the 100 people who made Watford as part of our centenary legacy.
- White Ribbon Day on 25 November 2022 was marked by the council in line with the achievement of White Ribbon accreditation.
- Winter Shelter provided accommodation for rough sleepers during pre-Christmas cold spell.
- The annual fireworks display attracted circa 30k people and raised funds for local charities.
- The Cost of Living Forum was convened with groups and organisations to bring together the support available and to make

sure people are aware of where to go for help. Watford established 'Welcoming Spaces' for the winter months.

### **A council working for our community and serving our residents**

- The Council's Customer Experience Strategy 2022-26 and Delivery Plan have been approved and implemented commence to ensure that we continue to deliver the very best services for our residents and community.
- The Building Control and Planning Enforcement Shared Services with St Albans City District Council went live from 1 November 2022. The implementation of the Legal Shared Services is well underway with implementation scheduled for 1 February 2023, ensuring that we continue to delivery high quality but efficient services.
- Planning is underway for the 2023 Borough Ward Elections and will be implementing the changes introduced by the Elections Act 2022 such as Voter ID, with town-wide communications planned.
- Our updated Procurement Strategy was approved by Cabinet in January 2023.
- Further health, wellbeing and resilience training courses as well as a menopause and cost of living sessions have been rolled out to support our employees and partners.

### **4.3 Organisational Development Strategy 2020-24 and associated Delivery Plan**

- 4.3.1 The Council Plan identifies the Organisational Development Strategy as a priority area of work under the theme 'A council working for our community and serving our residents'.
- 4.3.2 The council recognises our staff are critical to our success and to building our reputation as a council that delivers. At the same time, we know that the commitment of our staff and their passion for public service ensures we keep our residents, our businesses and community at the heart of everything we do. The importance of effectively matching our resources (both financial and staff) to the ambitions of our Council Plan and Delivery Plan was recognised when the plans were presented to Cabinet in June 2022 with a newly approved senior management structure.

- 4.3.3 The Organisational Development Strategy is also supported by a Delivery Plan, which translates the high level, strategic approach to how we develop our staff into practical and timely actions.
- 4.3.4 The full report can be seen in Appendix B but some key highlights are included below:
- Health, Wellbeing and Resilience workshops continued to be delivered to employees
  - Fully booked Menopause Awareness workshops were delivered
  - As the cost of living crisis came to the forefront, the Citizens Advice Bureau delivered a session to support employees at this time, with a further session planned for 2023
  - New corporate Values and Behaviours were launched in December 2022 and a structure for the behaviour framework agreed.
  - Two Management Development courses have been completed and positive feedback has been received
  - Senior Leaders took part in an awayday and all have undertaken the TMS assessment to increase their self-awareness
  - iTrent (Performance and Learning & Development) has been launched and has been used by all to undertake their PDRs
  - Data can now be extracted from iTrent to inform development and succession planning conversations
- 4.3.5 It should be noted that the Organisational Development Strategy was approved in June 2020, as the country emerged from the first wave of Covid-19. The council was subsequently required to respond to additional lockdowns and secondary waves of the pandemic. As such, a number of the activities initially identified within the Organisational Development Strategy were not deliverable within the timescales anticipated. Recognising that the council's introduction of agile working and a significant change in the external environment as a result of inflation and the cost of living crisis, the council are developing an updated People Strategy which will ensure that our ambitions relating to our commitments to staff remain aligned to our wider strategic direction. Those outstanding activities within the current Organisational Development Strategy will be reviewed and picked up by the new People Strategy.

#### **4.4 Key Performance Indicators**

4.4.1 Our key performance indicators underpin our Council Plan by ensuring that the organisation continues to perform against a range of measures. The measures highlighted within this report have supported the delivery of good quality services (both internal and external) by highlighting areas of good performance and, more importantly, under performance. This allows the council to ensure that services continue to offer a high quality service to our residents and businesses, and for action to be taken if areas of concern are identified.

4.4.2 The attached report (Appendix C), therefore, shows the results for the current set of key performance indicators at the end of Q3 for 2022/23. However, some key highlights are included below:

- All household waste and recycling indicators continue to be within target for Q3. There was 226 tonnes less waste recycled and composted when compared to Q3 21/22. To break it down further, there was 32 tonnes less recycling, 115 tonnes less green waste, and 79 tonnes less food waste collected. The dry hot summer is likely to be the cause of the lower green waste tonnages.
- Levels of litter, detritus and fly-posting all show significant improvement when compared with the same quarter last year, however detritus was the only street cleansing indicator exceeding the target set, with litter and fly-posting falling just outside of their targets. The indicator monitoring graffiti was just outside of the target, and this result is higher than Q3 last year, however graffiti levels remain low in most areas. The result reflects a spate of graffiti occurring in Other Highway, Main Road, Main Retail and Commercial and Other Retail and Commercial areas.
- Planning performance has improved since Q2. The processing of major applications was below target, with 1 processed outside of the timescales. However as there were only 2 major applications processed in Q3 this has a large impact on the result. Processing of minor applications was back above target, with only 1 application agreed outside of the timescales, out of a total of 38 received in Q3. Processing of other applications not categorised as major or minor was well within target at 100% of the 110 applications determined within the timescale or with an agreed extension of time.
- In the parking service, overall numbers of Penalty Charge Notices (PCN) issued decreased in Q3. The figures are inclusive of bus gate



PCN's, and a breakdown showing the bus gate figures has been included in Appendix C.

- The number of cases where the council has accepted a statutory duty to house remains at a low level and similar to Q2. There has been a surge in the number of households in temporary accommodation in the last three months, which is in common with the experience of boroughs in the rest of Hertfordshire: in fact the increased pressure has arrived with Watford later than other Hertfordshire boroughs. Until recently there were a large number of new homes handed over by housing associations which helped tremendously in being able to prevent homelessness and/or move households on quickly from temporary accommodation. Further detail on the main reasons for presenting as homeless and needing temporary accommodation is included in Appendix C.
- The financial indicators are almost all within quarterly targets, and on track to meet targets by the end of the year. The only exception is the value of outstanding invoices over 12 months, which was outside of the target of 10% or less, at 15.25%. Collections rates of Council Tax was within the quarterly target, largely due to the ERG payment credits being refunded. Collection rates of NNDR was 4.31% up on last year, which was mainly due to no additional retail relief in 2022/23 compared with 2021/22.
- Average time to process housing benefit claims has continued to speed up, and was down to 5 days in Q3, showing improvement since the last quarter. Average time to process a change of circumstance stayed at 5 days, which shows a 3 day improvement when compared with the same quarter last year. Automation of parts of the service have contributed to the improvement in processing times.
- There was a small decrease in Leisure Centre usage in Q3, which is consistent with the usual drop in participation in the lead up to Christmas. The exception to this was the throughput figures for Watford Leisure Centre: Central branch. A significant decrease in throughput was noted with figures dropping from 165,180 to 109,486. The closure of West Herts College during this time contributed to this result. Sports and Leisure Management (SLM) took this opportunity to increase marketing for all sessions. In addition, the service introduced a new referral campaign, accessed through the Everyone Active App, where members can refer a friend to get one month membership for free.
- Numbers of staff on long term sickness have reduced since quarter 2, however there has been a large increase in the number of short

term absences (61 in Q3 compared with 36 in Q2). Although sickness rates are higher when compared with quarter 3 last year, it is still within target.

- The 2022/23 Personal Development review (PDR) cycle was launched at the end of June with a target completion date of 31 August. In light of the senior management restructure that changed reporting lines for a number of staff, the deadline was extended to the end of quarter 3 to allow for new reporting arrangements to embed. The completion figure for PDR's at the end of Q3 was 72.3% - below the target of 100% but considerably higher than last year's result. Return to work interviews are still below the target of 100% completion within timescale, with the primary reason for late completion being the employee or manager on annual leave but additional information is now being shared with managers to help improve this figure. Figures assessing staff satisfaction and motivation were collected through the PDR process, and both are above target at 7.6 and 7.9 out of 10 respectively.
- ICT continue to report strong results, with all KPI's in Q3 on target or exceeding targets. Customer satisfaction is high with 93% of users filling out the customer satisfaction survey rating the service as meeting or exceeding expectations.
- After a very challenging Q2, all results related to the Customer Service Centre have bounced back and are well within their targets. The recruitment of 2.5 FTE and 1 corporate apprentice has helped achieve this. Also, with December being a shorter working month, customer contact quietens down towards the Christmas period.
- Responding to FOI's within timescales recorded an excellent result of 99%. The service worked hard to proactively monitor FOI's moving through the system. In addition, during Q3 staff outside of the CSC responsible for monitoring FOI's, were given access to FOI reports produced by the corporate reporting platform, with the aim of increasing visibility of FOI's moving through the system and their due dates.

## **5.0 Implications**

### **5.1 Financial**

- 5.1.1** The Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy is aligned with the Council Plan to ensure that the commitments within the Plan are resourced. The Council's budget underpins the whole of the Council Plan and Delivery

Plan. The importance of the budget is recognised under the theme ‘A Council working for our community and serving our residents’ with the related commitment being ‘Focus and challenge how we manage our budget so it is concentrated on delivering our commitments and securing greater investment for Watford’.

**5.1.2** The Shared Director of Finance comments that there are no further financial implications arising from the contents of this report.

## **5.2 Legal issues (Monitoring Officer)**

**5.2.1** The Group Head of Democracy and Governance comments that the Council Plan is one of the policy framework documents listed in the constitution that has to be approved by Council. The plan was approved by Council on 13 June 2022.

## **5.3 Risks**

<b>Nature of risk</b>	<b>Consequence</b>	<b>Suggested control measure</b>	<b>Response (treat, tolerate, terminate, transfer)</b>	<b>Risk rating (combination of severity and likelihood)</b>
Slippage on delivery of the Council Plan	Failure to deliver our commitments resulting in poorer outcomes for our town and residents.  Potential impact on the reputation of the Council.	Regular monitoring and reporting to Cabinet and Overview and Scrutiny  Robust project and programme management	Treat	3 (severity) x 2 (likelihood) = 6
Failure to recognise milestones / completion of commitments	Lost opportunity to celebrate success internally and externally	Regular monitoring and reporting to Cabinet and Overview and Scrutiny  Robust project and programme management	Treat	3 (severity) x 2 (likelihood) = 6

		Clear communication of milestones / achievements		
Failure to promote and recognise the Council's strategic approach and culture that is focused on delivery and outcomes	Lost opportunity to embed a renewed strategic approach and culture that ensures Watford BC remains a high performing, innovative and agile organisation	Regular, robust and accurate reports for Cabinet and Overview and Scrutiny that is owned across service areas  Linking delivery to staff and team objectives	Treat	3 (severity) x 1 (likelihood) = 3
Slippage on delivery of the Organisational Development Strategy	Failure to deliver our commitments to staff potentially resulting in failure to deliver our Council Plan.  Potential impact on staff's health and wellbeing.	Regular monitoring and reporting to Cabinet and Overview and Scrutiny  Robust project and programme management.  Regular checking in with staff through 1:1s, team meetings, surveys, Staff Ambassador Group	Treat	3 (severity) x 2 (likelihood) = 6
Loss of skilled staff / difficulties in recruiting if Organisational Development Strategy is not delivered and the council is not perceived as a place	Impact on delivery, potential cost implication if needed to recruit on short-term basis to fill posts	Regular monitoring and reporting to Cabinet and Overview and Scrutiny  Robust project and programme management.	Treat	3 (severity) x 2 (likelihood) = 6

where staff can develop and grow		Regular checking in with staff through 1:1s, team meetings, surveys, Staff Ambassador Group  Build into recruitment literature		
Failure to scrutinise organisational performance	Potential for performance to slip with consequences for quality of service delivery	Robust scrutiny and challenge	Treat	3 (severity) x 2 (likelihood) = 6
Failure to respond to issues with organisational performance	Potential for issues with performance not to be addressed, and for poor performance to continue	Response to issues identified monitored by Overview and Scrutiny Committee, Leadership Board and Portfolio Holders.	Treat	3 (severity) x 2 (likelihood) = 6
Failure to provide transparency over organisational performance	Lack of understanding and trust related to organisational performance, particularly where performance is below the standard expected.	Ensure KPIs have sufficient commentary explaining the context around the quarterly results. Ensure portfolio holders have regular opportunities to review and discuss organisation performance.	Treat	3 (severity) x 2 (likelihood) = 6

## **5.4 Equalities, Human Rights and Data Protection**

- 5.4.1** An Equality Impact Analysis (EIA) was developed for the Council Plan 2022-2026. This is consistently reviewed based on up to date information and data the council receives to ensure the council meets its public sector equalities under the s149 (1) of the Equality Act 2010.

EIAs were also developed for the Organisational Development Strategy 2020-24 during its development. These will also this will be monitored through the life of the respective strategies.

## **5.5 Sustainability**

- 5.5.1** The council's commitment to sustainability runs through the Council Plan and a range of actions to deliver our climate change commitments are identified within the Delivery Plan. These range from pushing forward with delivering greener ways to travel in Watford to promoting Watford's transition to a low-carbon economy. Indeed, an entire theme is devoted to delivering 'a brighter, greener future' with a whole range of activities planned to meet our sustainability commitments.

## **5.6 People Implications**

- 5.6.1** The Council Plan sets the Council's strategic direction, and is, therefore, a key document for staff, enabling them to understand our commitments and priorities and allowing them to contribute fully to our success and achievements. As the overarching plan for the Council, it provides the framework for all our strategies and policies and links, through the Delivery Plan, to service business plans and individual staff objectives and outcomes. The principles demonstrate how we go about our work and are an important guide for staff on the Council's expectations recognising it is not just what we deliver but how we deliver that is a measure of our organisational culture.

The Organisational Development Strategy supports the Council Plan and Delivery Plan to equip all staff to deliver the very best service for residents.

## **5.7 Community Safety/Crime and Disorder**

- 5.7.1** 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. Our theme: A diverse, happy and healthy town, underpins our

commitment to ‘promote our welcoming and respectful town’ and the associated action to ‘ensure everyone feels welcome, included and safe in Watford’ and to ‘stablish our commitment to the wellbeing of women and girls’ by working with partners and using our statutory powers.

## **6.0 Actions arising from this Proposal**

**6.1** This report is to update the Cabinet on the following:

- Appendix A – Council Plan 2022-26 / Delivery Plan 2022-24 Q3 progress update
- Appendix B – Organisational Development Strategy 2020-24 Q3 progress update
- Appendix C – Key Performance Indicators update Q3 2022-23

Following review by Cabinet, this report will be presented to Overview and Scrutiny Committee for comment.

## **7.0 Appendices**

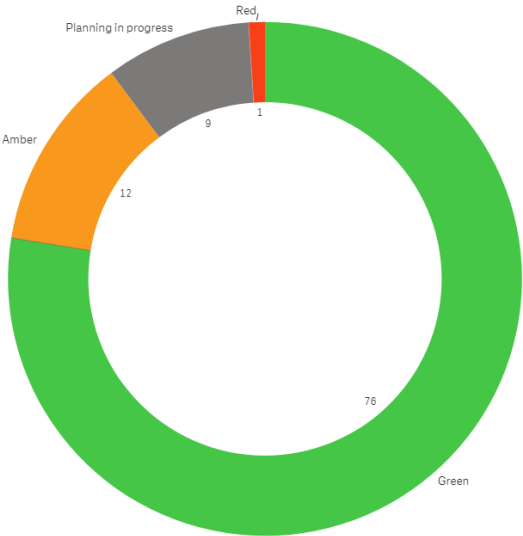
- Appendix A – Council Plan 2022-26 / Delivery Plan 2022-24 Q3 progress update
- Appendix B – Organisational Development Strategy 2020-24 Q3 progress update
- Appendix C – Key Performance Indicators update Q3 2022-23

## **8.0 Background Papers**

- Watford Borough Council: Council Plan 2022-26
- Watford Borough Council: Delivery Plan 2024-26
- Watford Borough Council: Organisational Development Strategy 2020-24

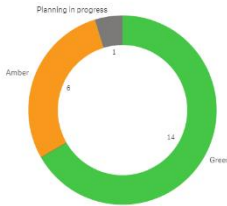
# Appendix A - Council Delivery Plan Progress update Q3 2022/23

## Delivery Plan Overview



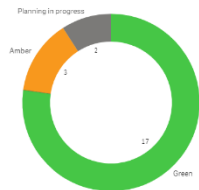
**Council Plan Theme - A greener, brighter future**

CDP Activity BRAG Split



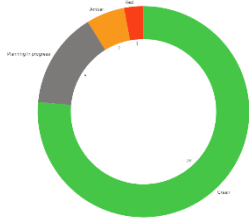
**Council Plan Theme - An inspiring, thriving and creative town**

CDP Activity BRAG Split



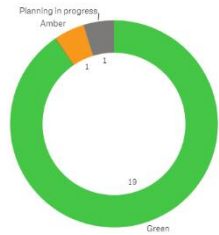
**Council Plan Theme - A diverse, happy and healthy town**

CDP Activity BRAG Split



**Council Plan Theme - A Council working for our community and serving our residents**

CDP Activity BRAG Split

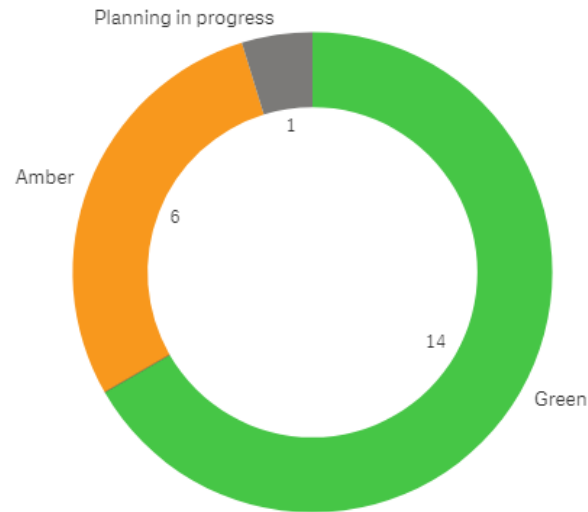


**Key**  
**Blue** – Ahead of schedule  
**Green** – On track  
**Amber** – Potential Risks / Some uncertainty  
**Red** – Challenges








## THEME: A greener brighter future





### Overview



### Key achievements over this period

- In line with our commitment to sustainable transport, work with a number of Watford schools to develop and improve their School Travel Plan (STP) which will enable them to be provided with cycle parking is underway.
- Following the Tree Nominations initiative held in the summer, tree planting is now underway, with additional funds for whip replacement also secured.
- The 'Tales of the River' project, funded by a successful £246.7k bid to the National Heritage Lottery Fund has been initiated and will help to promote the value of the River to our town.
- A Supplementary Planning Document for developers on how they can contribute to enhancing biodiversity across the town has been developed. The SPD is expected to be adopted later in the year following consultation.
- The consultation on the draft Sustainability Strategy. 2023-30 ended in December 2022. 679 responses were received across various media, all generally positive with 'net zero' being the most engaged topic. Formal endorsement of the Strategy, now called Watford's Environmental Strategy: addressing the climate and ecological emergency at Cabinet is expected in March 2023

Commitment	Activity		BRAG' Rating	Trend	Headline
<p><b>Encourage people to make greener travel choices, reducing congestion and improving the health and wellbeing of the town</b></p>	<p>1. Investigate greener travel and transport solutions that work for Watford</p>	<p>We will continue to investigate the potential for a low-carbon transport hub in Watford town centre to encourage more use of public transport, reducing congestion and improving air quality for everyone.</p>	<p><b>Green</b></p>		<p>Forming part of our ambitious Transforming Travel in Watford programme, the exploration of a low-carbon transport hub in the Town Centre remains underway with feasibility works being progressed.</p>
	<p>2. Promote ways of to travel that support people make greener choices</p>	<p>We will explore initiatives such as secure cycle parking and school travel plans to give people options other than using their car for every journey.</p>	<p><b>Green</b></p>		<p>We are continuing our work towards achieving net carbon zero by 2030 through the Transforming Travel in Watford programme. Progress to date includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Desktop study to understand the current market for sustainable reward schemes to inform the development of the council's own reward scheme has commenced.</li> <li>- Framework identified to progress procurement of the new Car Club for Watford. The specification and procurement strategy are being finalised with six bays across the town identified for car club vehicles.</li> <li>- Work on our Local Cycling and Walking Implementation Plan continues with priorities for the 'Green Loop' identified for further consideration.</li> <li>- Contacted primary and secondary schools within Watford to encourage the uptake of Schools Travel Plans (STPs), supported by local councillors. Two virtual sessions have been held to promote the STPs and work is underway with interested schools. Cycle parking will be provided to schools who have a STP and are actively working towards national accreditation via Modeshift STARS programme.</li> </ul>
	<p>3. Champion sustainable travel initiatives and greener vehicles options</p>	<p>We will introduce initiatives such as electric vehicles, e-cargo bikes, electric charging points and e-car clubs to encourage more use of green transport, reducing congestion and improving air quality.</p>	<p><b>Green</b></p>		<p>In order to support our drive for greater uptake of sustainable journeys, an application for external funding (On-Street Residential Chargepoint Scheme) was submitted in November 2022. We have continued to work closely with Hertfordshire County Council, as the Highways Authority, who have drafted a county-wide Electric Vehicle Strategy.</p>
	<p>4. Work with our partners to improve our cycling and walking network, including designing and implementing a green loop</p>	<p>We will work with Hertfordshire County Council and our cycling and walking communities to improve the cycling and walking network across our town so more people choose to cycle and walk.</p>	<p><b>Green</b></p>		<p>Cycling and walking network plans are progressing, with project validation complete for the Green Loop East and Hempstead Road, and design underway for a number of other routes, including the Water Lane to Lower High Street link and the Ebury Way to Ascot Road link.</p>
	<p>5. Champion proposals for a sustainable transport option for Watford Junction to Croxley</p>	<p>We will work closely with Hertfordshire County Council on the Watford to Croxley Link, examining the feasibility of options to secure the best transport system for our town, offering greater choice for our residents, visitors and commuters to travel sustainably.</p>	<p><b>Green</b></p>		<p>In line with the council's commitment to support proposals for a sustainable transport across the town, we have been working closely with Hertfordshire County Council. The Options and Feasibility study into potential alternatives for the Watford to Croxley Link (formerly MLX) corridor is underway. Following evaluation of the stage one proposal we have now appointed a consultant to proceed to stage two.</p>

Commitment	Activity		BRAG' Rating	Trend	Headline
<p align="center"><b>Promote improvements to Watford's biodiversity to enhance the range of habitats, plants and wildlife in the town</b></p>	<p>6. Set out our commitments to improving Watford's biodiversity</p>	<p>We will develop our Strategy and Biodiversity Action Plan, recognising the importance of our range of habitats across the town and setting out how we will improve and enhance these for future generations.</p>	<p><b>Green</b></p>		<p>Our Biodiversity Strategy is being scoped alongside the emerging Watford's Environmental Strategy to develop a suite of documents supporting planning, sustainability and service delivery. We are recruiting additional resource to drive forward this work. A range of work is already underway to support our commitment to biodiversity, including our improvements to the River Colne and the Cassiobury Wetlands. We have recently been awarded £246.7k National Lottery Heritage fund to support engagement activities for the River Colne's 'Tales of the River' project.</p>
	<p>7. Enhance and extend our green canopy, through our proactive tree planting initiative</p>	<p>We will work with our community to plant 20,000 trees across the town by 2026, increasing our green canopy, making Watford a more pleasant place to live, work and enjoy recreation time.</p>	<p><b>Green</b></p>		<p>Trees have been delivered and planting is now underway based on the Tree Nominations initiative held in the summer. We held a successful Tree Giveaway event on 3 December 2022 and have secured additional funds from HCC for whip replacement.</p>
	<p>8. Rediscover the River Colne to enhance the river, the river corridor, as a place for our community to enjoy</p>	<p>We will improve the River Colne through Watford to make it a more appealing place for local people to enjoy and a better environment for plants and wildlife to flourish.</p>	<p><b>Amber</b></p>		<p>Having recently been successful with our National Lottery Fund bid (£246.7k), the 'Tales of the River' project, to bring the important place of the river within our town to the fore for residents, has been initiated with the launch of a Press Release and video. We have recruited a Project Support Officer and shared a Podcast brief and job description with West Herts College for an intern position. We are continuing to pursue other sources of funding to support delivery of the wider River Colne programme. We are progressing our engagement activities with the local community and recently approved a corporate offering. We have also confirmed joint school sessions with Veolia and held initial discussions with Affinity Water on their involvement in the programme. Whilst we are still waiting for the relevant permission from the Environment Agency to proceed with the Knutsford South volunteer work this winter, hence the amber rating, we have been given the go ahead to complete the tree works outside of the permit. We are currently evaluating the tree works bid.</p>
	<p>9. Reinvigorate the Cassiobury Wetlands as an important part of our natural environment</p>	<p>We will improve the wetland and habitat of the former watercress beds on the River Gade in Cassiobury Park to enhance biodiversity, water quality and preserve and protect relevant related historical features.</p>	<p><b>Amber</b></p>		<p>Our ambitious project to improve the Cassiobury Wetlands has continued to progress and ongoing discussions with the proposed contractor and the Environment Agency (EA) have confirmed that site investigations can progress under the existing permit variation. The contractor is due to visit the site in January 2023 to complete the investigatory work. The EA permit for the work has been granted an extension for 3 years giving an extended window to complete the scheme and currently the expected work commencement date is August / October 2023.</p>

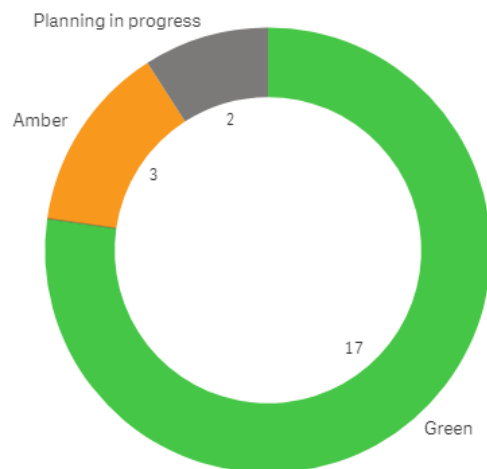
Commitment	Activity		BRAG' Rating	Trend	Headline
	10. Celebrate and enhance Whippendell Woods as a site of special scientific interest	We will protect Whippendell Woods, a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), in order to preserve its 'favourable condition' status.	Amber	↔	In line with our commitment to sustainability, works remain ongoing in Whippendell Woods alongside the Forestry Commission with maps created to show the works completed and those planned across the next 5 years. An agreement has been reached with Veolia to complete a tree health and safety survey this year. An annual grant is currently under debate hence the amber status.
	11. Promote healthy and sustainable gardening across the town	We will continue compost give-aways using our green waste recycling to bring back the organic material as free, nutrient-rich compost for Watford residents to grow plants and vegetables.	Green	↔	In line with our commitment to promote healthy and sustainable gardening across the town, the council's popular Compost Giveaway will continue on an annual basis, encouraging and supporting our residents to grow plants and vegetables. The Tree Giveaway, which was hugely successful this summer, will take place every 2 years, contributing to our commitment to enhance the green canopy across the town. We are preparing for the next round of compost giveaway and planning future tree giveaways.
	12. Provide clear guidance on improving biodiversity in the town	We will set out guidance for developers on how to improve and enhance biodiversity in developments so they contribute to the town's goals for better habitats and environmental diversity	Amber	↔	Recognising that our ambitions to enhance biodiversity across the town will only be achieved if everyone remains committed, a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) for developers on how they can contribute to this vision has been drafted. The SPD has been reviewed by the relevant Portfolio Holders and a briefing provided to Corporate Management Team. Consultation is expected to begin in January 2023 and formal adoption of the SPD later in the year, slightly later than expected. A range of work is also underway to support our commitment to biodiversity, including our improvements to the River Colne and Cassiobury Wetlands.
Work alongside our community and businesses to find the right ways to reach net carbon neutral, seeking not just to learn from others but to explore innovative solutions that will work for Watford	13. Develop and implement our new Sustainability Strategy	We will work with our community and businesses to develop and implement our new Sustainability Strategy, now called Watford's Environmental Strategy: addressing the climate and ecological emergency, which will set out how together, we can contribute to our target to be a net carbon neutral borough by 2030.	Green	↔	The consultation on the draft Watford's Environmental Strategy 2023-30 ended in December 2022. 679 responses were received across various media, all generally positive with 'net zero' being the most engaged topic. The Strategy is being reviewed and updates are being made in light of the feedback, including adding 'light pollution' in the Strategy. A review of the resource requirements and delivery plan for the Strategy was undertaken in December 2022. Cabinet approval of the final strategy is scheduled for to March 2023
	14. Prepare for legislative changes to help protect our environment	We will respond to the requirements of the Environment Act 2021 to ensure we deliver on our role in improving air quality, tackling waste, improving biodiversity and making other environmental improvements.	Green	↑	As above, the development of our Environmental Strategy 2023 - 2030 is in progress and this includes working with residents and businesses in the town on our ambition of achieving net carbon zero by 2030, taking into account the requirements of the Environment Act 2021. The Strategy will be presented to Cabinet in March 2023 for approval with a view to commencing delivery from April 2023.

Commitment	Activity	BRAG' Rating	Trend	Headline	
	15. Explore opportunities that will contribute financially to our green commitments and goals	We will explore innovative, economically viable ideas that contribute to net carbon zero tapping into emerging trends, including investigating the possibility of green bonds to raise funds for planned projects.	Green	↔	The council has initiated discussions with the Government's Green Finance Institute and Abundance, the FCA regulated company who delivers the Green Investment Bond scheme. Whilst we need to identify funding in the capital programme and specific schemes that the funding will be used for and also gauge interest in specific schemes from residents, due to the current economic climate and the rise in interest rates this proposal has been deferred until the economic climate improves.
	16. Investigate generating energy from renewable sources	We will examine including sustainable energy generation in council developments so we lead by example and demonstrate how it can work effectively.	Planning in progress	↔	The installation of solar panels on the roofs of the Town Hall and Colosseum are just one example of how the council is looking to generate sustainable energy within its own buildings and developments. A recent submission to the third round of the government's public sector decarbonisation scheme means that future works cannot yet be confirmed. The outcome of the bid is expected in early 2023.
	17. Improve the energy performance of the Town Hall and Watford Colosseum	We will carry out extensive de-carbonisation works to our Town Hall and Colosseum to improve their energy efficiency and ensure they have a reduced carbon footprint.	Amber	↔	The decarbonisation work to the Town Hall and Colosseum, funded by the £3m central government grant, is progressing well. We are commencing the final phase of the planned work on the windows, M&E systems and fabric repairs. Our contractor, Morgan Sindall, are looking at options for the safe repair of the Clock Tower. The scheme is expected to be completed in Spring 2023, slightly later than initially expected as a result of the specialist repair of the heritage windows.
	18. Ensure the council's own buildings are energy efficient	We will explore ways to improve the energy performance of all properties within our portfolio.	Green	↔	In line with our ambition to lead by example, we are appointing a consultant at Croxley Business Park to assist in data collection/assessment of energy usage and to act as a case study for potential wider roll out across the Council through a procurement exercise. We are developing a brief for the consultant to review WBC assets. We have also applied for the next round of funding from the Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme to improve the energy efficiency of some of our operational and community estate.
	19. Promote sustainable construction in our own developments	We will actively encourage the use of sustainable materials in any of our new developments so we can role model to others who develop in our town.	Amber	↔	As with the Town Hall and the Colosseum, the council is continuing to encourage the use of sustainable materials in new development with a BREEAM rating of 'Very Good' targeted for direct development of Gateway Zone at Watford Business Park and HQM of 4 (out of 5) at Riverside Road development. The amber status reflects the delay in commencing construction work at Watford Business Park due to issues with the Environment Agency however there is no impact on the scheme sustainability criteria. We are working with existing joint venture partners to assess and implement the most efficient and viable energy solutions in residential projects. Similarly, the recent refurbishment of the Annexe at the Town Hall saw 94% of all material recycled with even higher targets achieved to date on the decarbonisation works at the Town Hall and Colosseum.

Commitment	Activity		BRAG' Rating	Trend	Headline
<p><b>Encourage residents and businesses to recycle more, reusing materials and reducing waste and what they throw away</b></p>	<p>20. Increase how much our residents recycle and reduce the waste we throw away as a town</p>	<p>We will build on the success of our waste and recycling scheme to boost household recycling rates across the borough, introducing the opportunity for food waste collections for all households and setting targets that reflect our sustainability ambitions.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Green</b></p>	<p style="text-align: center;">↔</p>	<p>The waste and recycling service changes introduced in 2020 has resulted in a significant increase in recycling rates across the town. The council and its contractor will strive to deliver the new target for recycling rates over the next four years, with the target subject to a general review of all council Key Performance Indicators this year and due to be launched for the 2023/24 financial year. A proposal for the introduction of food waste from flats and high-rise building is being developed with a view to implementing the changes in 2023 subject to budget. The scheme will make it easy and simple for all residents to recycle as much as they can.</p>
	<p>21. Support our partners to reduce waste and increase recycling</p>	<p>We will work with our partners, including our environmental services provider and leisure services provider to deliver the next step change in reducing waste and increasing recycling, particularly through campaigns and changing behaviours.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Green</b></p>	<p style="text-align: center;">↔</p>	<p>We are awaiting new regulations on waste this year. Our provider (Veolia) is analysing waste and public behaviours which will inform our future waste strategy. The Herts Waste focus for 2023 is food waste and we will be developing a proposal to introduce food waste collection to flats this year. We are planning Veolia education events and further clothes swaps in the New Year. We will also be raising 'Repair Cafés' at Herts Waste partnership and exploring a 'repair fair' event.</p>

## THEME: An inspiring, thriving and creative town

### Overview



### Key achievements over this period

- The government approved Watford's UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) investment plan in December 2022 and year 1 funding allocation has been received.
- Our place brand and narrative has been developed to build on the initial concepts. An associated implementation and resourcing plan is being developed alongside the creative content to ensure successful rollout.
- In November 2022, Mace Develop were selected as our preferred joint venture partner to help deliver our ambition to revitalise the north end of the High Street and around the Town Hall.
- Work is continuing on the refurbishment of Watford Colosseum with the decarbonisation works now almost complete.
- The Town Centre Strategic Framework consultation is now complete will be presented to Cabinet in March 2023 for final sign off.
- The 'Shop and Eat Local' campaign was brought forward to coincide with the festive period. The council is continuing to engage with new businesses and encouraging local people to nominate businesses to be promoted locally.
- Following inspection and amendments, the Local Plan has now been adopted by the council and provides the council with the opportunity to influence local and sustainable development across the town.

Commitment	Activity	BRAG' Rating	Trend	Headline	
Position Watford as a town where start-ups and business innovation can thrive, supported by strong local skills, generating a range of job opportunities, including for our young people	22. Deliver our Innovation and Incubation Hub	We will provide a new Innovation and Incubation Hub, as part of our Town Hall Quarter, which will support start-up businesses in the town and give our key sectors a boost, tapping into the significant opportunity provided by the flourishing creative sector and drawing businesses into the borough.	Amber	↓	As part of our ambitious Town Hall Quarter scheme, the business case for the future use of the Town Hall, including a new innovation and incubation hub, was approved by Cabinet in December 2021. However, the recent announcement that the council was unsuccessful in their application to the Levelling Up Fund means that the options in relation to the delivery of the Hub need to be reviewed. This will be undertaken over the next quarter.
	23. Develop a skills and employment plan for Watford that supports the current, and future, needs of our local businesses and life chances of residents	We will work with our business community and education partners, linking to the Hertfordshire LEP Skills and Employment Plan to develop and deliver a Watford Skills and Employment Plan, connecting local skills to business needs.	Green	↑	West Herts College is drafting the Watford Skills and Employment Plan and Herts Chamber are leading the Herts-wide Local Skills Improvement Plan which will provide some of the evidence base for the Watford Skills and Employment Plan. The Economic Development Team is assisting with the plan development by providing the Watford context. The plan will align with the emerging Community Wealth Building Plan and the emerging Sectors Action Plan.
	24. Maximise economic potential and harness new opportunities from Watford's future growth sectors	We will engage with our successful business sectors and partners at local, county and regional levels, building on the economic drive our sectors provide for Watford's economy, promoting clustering where it makes sense for our town to create greater growth and encourage inward investment.	Green	↔	The Sectors Action Plan will be progressed in quarter 1 2023/24 due to the UK Shared Prosperity Fund taking priority, although the evidence has been gathered and sub-regional work is underway with parties around creative and screen industry potential.
	25. Make the most of our Shared Prosperity Fund allocation	We will use our Shared Prosperity Fund to boost our ambitions for prosperity, jobs and skills, spreading opportunities and building our sense of community pride.	Green	↔	The government approved Watford's UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) investment plan in December 2022 and year 1 funding allocation has been received. The UKSPF Delivery Plan has now been approved and the council's Economic Development Team are preparing for procurement of year 1 and 2 projects by the end of March 2023.
Tell Watford's story as a great location for businesses where they can invest, grow and succeed as part of our flourishing business community and networks that connect people	26. Promote what makes Watford a great location for business, connecting to building pride in the town and our profile as a great place to visit	We will work with partners to shape our place narrative and brand, sharing what is great about Watford, attracting more visitors and supporting our local economy, putting the town on the map as a great place for business.	Green	↔	Our place brand and narrative has been developed to build on the initial concepts. The revised concepts were shared with key stakeholders during Quarter 3. An associated implementation and resourcing plan is being developed alongside the creative content to ensure successful rollout.
	27. Ensure there is a strong voice for local businesses by fostering effective business networks and forums	We will engage with Watford businesses, encouraging an empowered business community that can be a strong voice for the town, making the most of opportunities and new ventures and encouraging vibrant networks and forums that bring businesses together in a meaningful and effective way.	Green	↔	Engagement with businesses is underway and this objective will seek to respond to that feedback by creating two new council-led business forums in order to improve communication and information sharing. Building on this feedback, we will also seek to assess and connect with the range of business networks and forums led by others to ensure a strong business voice is heard and communication with business is effective and productive.



Commitment	Activity		BRAG' Rating	Trend	Headline
					The Economic Development Team is preparing for the first Business Connect meeting which is scheduled for 21 March. The first Business Leaders meeting is expected to be held in September 2023.
	28. Engage with wider economic, business and planning partnerships to make sure Watford's interests are represented	We will work closely with our partners in Hertfordshire LEP, Herts Growth Board and the South West Herts Joint Strategic Partnership to shape and influence wider discussions on our economic role and impact.	Amber	↔	We are continuing to work closely with all our partners to shape our planning and economic partnerships. This includes agreeing a Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) with all five south west Herts authorities and the launch of a consultation on the 'Realising our Potential' document which sets out the draft vision and objectives for working together in the future for the benefit of the wider south-west Hertfordshire area. Further certainty will be provided following the conclusion of the consultation.
Create a distinctive and successful neighbourhood at the heart of our town, providing space and time for residents, businesses and the community to enjoy and experience	29. Progress our transformational plans for the Town Hall Quarter	We will take forward plans to revitalise the north end of Watford High Street to create a vibrant and attractive neighbourhood within our Town Hall Quarter for our residents to enjoy, as well as establishing a new area in the town for culture to flourish.	Amber	↔	In November 2022, Mace Develop were selected as our preferred joint venture partner to help deliver our ambition to revitalise the north end of the High Street and around the Town Hall. Whilst the current economic climate has meant that the anticipated investment has not yet been made, hence the amber status of this commitment, a meeting was held with Mace to discuss the practical activities and working arrangements going forward. We have also commenced de-risking activities associated with utilities, highways and financial analysis. We are continuing discussion with NHS on the Health Hub and a funding contract for £40k has been confirmed with Homes England.
	30. Secure the future of Watford Colosseum, improving the heritage building and attracting a new operator	We will refurbish the Watford Colosseum so it remains a first-class entertainment venue, attracting a new operator to bring an exciting and diverse range of performances and creative events to boost the town's cultural offer and local economy.	Green	↔	Alongside the decarbonisation works which are already underway, work continues to refurbish Watford Colosseum. Our construction contractors are in the process of completing the final design with enabling works already underway at the venue. The full refurbishment will commence in the Spring and is expected to be completed towards the end of 2023. A procurement process to appoint a new operator is underway with a decision due to be made by Cabinet in March 2023.
	31. Enhance a sustainable town centre with a mixed economy that will have a broad appeal to all ages and interests	We will develop our Town Centre Framework to ensure that our vibrant and diverse town centre continues to attract residents, businesses and visitors to live, work, shop, eat, drink and enjoy spending time.	Green	↔	Following a significant level of public engagement, the Town Centre Strategic Framework consultation is now complete and will be presented to Cabinet in March 2023 for adoption.
	32. Enhance our outdoor public spaces to make them welcoming and attractive	We will improve a number of our public spaces to provide excellent, safe and attractive outdoor spaces that support a greener Watford. This work will include the enhancement of key areas of our town such as St Mary's Churchyard, Market Street, Queens Road and St Albans Road.	Green	↔	Building on previous public realm improvements in Clarendon Road and Market Street, work is almost complete in Queens Road. Planning work will commence in St Mary's Churchyard over the next period. The council remains committed to investing in our public realm spaces to support local businesses and is consulting with the County Council on options for the next phase of public realm works.

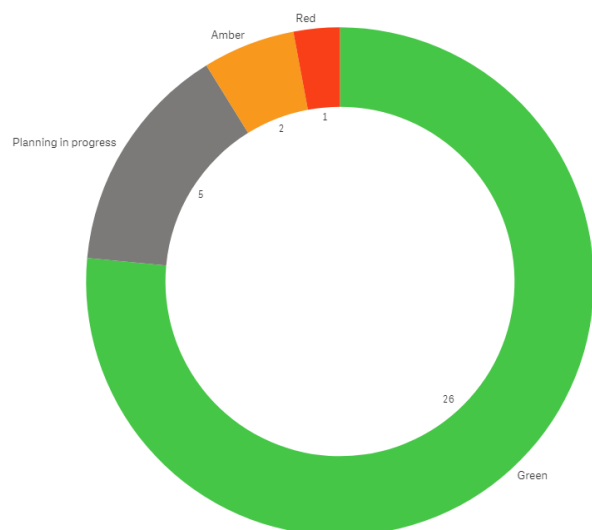
Commitment	Activity		BRAG' Rating	Trend	Headline
	33. Promote the appeal of our town centre and all it has to offer	We will continue to deliver our 'Shop and Eat Local' campaign to attract people to our town centre, supporting our local businesses and their unique appeal.	Green	↔	The 'Shop and Eat Local' campaign was brought forward to coincide with the festive period and attract people to our busy town centre. We are continuing to engage with new businesses and encouraging local people to nominate businesses.
	34. Promote Watford Market and our offer as a market town	We will support our local traders by continuing to run our popular 'Market Late' events, showcasing the great range of food and drink stalls in the market and trialling specialist markets.	Green	↔	Market Lates have continued to bring more visitors to our vibrant and refreshed market, following the significant investment made in the space last year. The Market Late events have provided a great opportunity for local traders to showcase their diverse food and drink offer, with the most recent event held over Halloween during half term, which attracted around 600 people. A number of specialist markets have also been held with an event specifically for new businesses, starts up and young, local traders and plans for vegan and green and continental specialist markets in the pipeline.
Ensure the right mix of facilities, services and transport links as part of new developments to create successful, well-designed new communities	35. Take forward plans for the Watford Junction Quarter	We will bring landowners together so we can progress with our long-term plans to create a new Watford neighbourhood that successfully combines new homes, station facilities, jobs, public space, school provision and community facilities for both our existing and new residents.	Green	↔	Whilst the council does not own the land around Watford Junction, we are committed to improving the local amenities to create a new neighbourhood and have continued to liaise with key landowners and stakeholders regarding the redevelopment of the area. The Council is also in conversation with Network Rail regarding future improvements of the station.
	36. Continue our transformation of Watford Business Park	We will complete the Gateway development at Watford Business Park to continue our plans to create new and high quality business space to maximise local employment opportunities and generate income for the council to support its wider priorities.	Green	↑	Following the sign off of our ambitious and exciting plans to develop Watford Business Park into a new and high quality business space, the main contract works are progressing well and completion is expected in quarter 1 2023. We have appointed an agent for the marketing element of the programme and we will be establishing a Marketing Team in the next period. A market report confirms the viability of the scheme. We are looking at options fit out eight of the large units for office use.
	37. Continue to deliver the neighbourhood at Riverwell	We will continue to develop the Riverwell scheme to deliver a high quality mix of new homes, jobs, open spaces and community facilities, maintaining an income source for the council to support its wider priorities. The work at Riverwell will support the opportunity for West Hertfordshire Hospitals NHS Trust to deliver its ambition for an acute hospital in Watford.	Green	↔	As part of our commitment to deliver a new neighbourhood at Riverwell, the Woodlands part of the scheme is now complete with sales progressing for the other two existing residential elements of Riverwell; Waterside and Mayfield. The Bellway scheme reached practical completion in September. The multi-storey car park has been completed and is now in operation providing revenue to the council and much needed safe and accessible parking for hospital visitors.

Commitment	Activity		BRAG' Rating	Trend	Headline
	38. Achieve the right long-term balance of development, services and transport links for our town	We will adopt our new Local Plan for Watford which will shape how the town will develop sustainably over the next 30 years and make sure that key development sites are underpinned with creative, sustainable and well considered planning frameworks.	<b>Green</b>	↔	Following inspection and amendments, the Local Plan has now been adopted by the council and provides the council with the opportunity to influence local and sustainable development across the town.  There were no legal challenges in the 6 weeks following adoption, therefore the Local Plan is now finalised.
<b>Make sure we have quality homes to meet the needs of residents, including housing that is affordable through direct ownership, private rental, affordable and social rent housing</b>	39. Deliver a new Housing Strategy for Watford	We will deliver a Housing Strategy that sets out the strategic direction for housing activity in Watford for the next five years. The delivery of housing growth, bringing inward investment into the borough, ensuring existing homes are of good quality, and preventing homelessness will all contribute to meeting the housing challenges faced by our residents.	<b>Planning in progress</b>	↔	A paper on the approach to delivering the Housing Strategy will be taken to Portfolio Holders in March 2023 including an outline project plan. We have planned to commence the new Strategy in Q2 of 2023/24.
	40. Review and refresh our Nominations Policy	We will deliver a new Nominations Policy for Watford to help our residents apply to our housing register, how we manage the register, your choice about where you live, how we assess applications and allocate properties.	<b>Green</b>	↔	The principles for a revised Nominations Policy have been drafted and are ready for consultation. Over the next period, any changes to the existing policy will be reviewed and informed by legal advice, with consultation undertaken prior to any major changes.
	41. Improve housing provision for those local families who need homes that are affordable	We will work with partners to deliver high quality new homes for social rent, for local families who need them the most and support the housing needs of the most vulnerable members of our community.	<b>Green</b>	↔	A Steering Group to deliver social rented homes across the town has been created with representatives across the council from Property, Housing, Planning, Finance etc. This group will work, liaising with Members, to develop and secure opportunities. A meeting with Homes England took place to discuss options to make best use of land, assets, influence and finance.
	42. Develop planning guidance to ensure developers provide new homes that support local needs	We will provide guidance to inform how new homes and buildings should be designed so they meet the needs of Watford and are built to a high standard.	<b>Green</b>	↔	Scoping work is continuing, including document structure reflecting different parts of the borough (principles of high density living, Town Centre, Colne Valley, householder development). The project will likely consist of several guidance documents rather than just one Supplementary Planning Document (SPD).
	43. Deliver a refreshed Private Sector Renewal Policy	We will review and refresh our Private Sector Renewal policy to support the improvement of Watford's housing stock, setting out how we can help the private sector improve and maintain housing quality in the town.	<b>Planning in progress</b>	↔	The refreshment of our Private Sector Renewal policy will be scoped and the project plan developed for approval over the next period, in line with priorities agreed for all housing strategies and policies. It should be noted that funding for the data that will inform the new policy has not yet been approved through budget processes and that costs and options for funding are being explored.



## THEME: A diverse, happy and healthy town

### Overview



### Key achievements over this period

- The council remain committed to investment in Woodside and the updated scheme and multi-million pound investment was approved by Cabinet in January 2023. It will include renovating the buildings to provide energy efficient facilities for cricket, football, and boxing for all ages, as well as spaces for shared community use. There will also be modern and accessible changing rooms for clubs already based there – including Watford Town Cricket Club, the junior and adult football clubs and Watford Amateur Boxing Club.
- In recognition of Watford’s 100 years as a borough, a successful flag flying exercise with local schools was held, 100-year old residents were recognised and a community led centenary service was held on Centenary Day. The end of year 100-year celebration exhibition was held at Watford Museum.
- White Ribbon Day on 25 November 2022 was marked by the council in line with the achievement of White Ribbon accreditation.
- Winter Shelter provided accommodation for rough sleepers during pre-Christmas cold spell.
- The annual fireworks display attracted circa 30k people and raised funds for local charities.
- The Cost of Living Forum was convened with groups and organisations to bring together the support available and to make sure people are aware of where to go for help. Watford established ‘Welcoming Spaces’ for the winter months.

Commitment	Activity		BRAG' Rating	Trend	Headline
<p><b>Continue our investment in our outstanding parks and open spaces so they remain the best in the area</b></p>	<p>44. Deliver improvements to Meriden Park</p>	<p>We will, in consultation with our residents, improve the popular and well-loved Meriden Park, including providing new paths, planting and landscaping, for the whole community to enjoy.</p>	<p>Green</p>	<p>↔</p>	<p>Plans to improve our popular Meriden Park are well underway, following significant engagement with residents and members. The hardworks (pathway construction, dropped kerbs, knee high railing and height barrier) are now nearing completion, although there is a slight delay due to adverse weather conditions. The softworks, including tree and bulb planting, benches and seeding mounds, should be completed over the next period. We have also reached an agreement to install an additional table tennis table in the park.</p>
	<p>45. Continue our programme of investment and improvements in Watford's parks</p>	<p>We will carry out a range of improvements across our award winning parks and open spaces, including improving footpaths, refurbishing grass tennis courts, and carrying out cycling path repairs. In addition, we will promote the 'cycling code of conduct' and associated engagement programme to support considerate cycling.</p>	<p>Green</p>	<p>↑</p>	<p>The planned works relating to the Vicarage Road Cemetery main wall are now complete. The cycling path repairs and improvements in Cassiobury Park are also complete. We have installed temporary 'Considerate Cycling' banners in the park. Overall projects are now tracking to plan, hence the improvement in the BRAG rating. Further works will be assessed over the next period.</p>
	<p>46. Enhance Woodside Playing Fields so it offers improved facilities and opportunities for leisure and sport</p>	<p>We will invest in Woodside Playing Fields to enhance the activities on offer, including improvements to both the current boxing and cricket facilities.</p>	<p>Green</p>	<p>↔</p>	<p>The council remain committed to investment in Woodside and the updated scheme and multi-million pound investment was approved by Cabinet in January 2023. It will include renovating the buildings to provide energy efficient facilities for cricket, football, and boxing for all ages, as well as spaces for shared community use. There will also be modern and accessible changing rooms for clubs already based there – including Watford Town Cricket Club, the junior and adult football clubs and Watford Amateur Boxing Club. Further engagement with the Cricket and Boxing Clubs in relation to their business plans, tenancy heads of terms, and terms of the associated community use agreements is planned over the next period.</p>
	<p>47. Complete our work in partnership for a new crematorium for south west Hertfordshire</p>	<p>We will complete the new crematorium and agree future running arrangements, with our partner local authorities, to deliver enhanced facilities, including a remembrance chapel and gardens.</p>	<p>Red</p>	<p>↓</p>	<p>Work continues on-site at the new crematorium at its Hemel Hempstead base, providing residents of South West Hertfordshire, including Watford residents, with enhanced facilities and service provisions. There is a risk that the opening of the facility may be delayed to Summer 2023 due to issues with utilities work and delay by the Environment Agency. Nevertheless, work continues to complete the on-site build on time and to progress plans in relation to wayfinding and opening preparations. <b>NB: Since Quarter 3, the issue with the Environment Agency has been resolved and additional outstanding utility works have been undertaken which means the facility should open in the Spring as planned and this RAG rating will show an improvement in the next reporting period.</b></p>

Commitment	Activity		BRAG' Rating	Trend	Headline
<p align="center"><b>Celebrate and promote our town's rich and diverse culture and creativity</b></p>	<p>48. Reimagine our Museum and its place in telling the history of our town</p>	<p>We will develop proposals for a modern, inspiring Heritage and Museum service based in our historic Town Hall that engages and educates our residents and visitors by telling the story of our town and its rich and diverse history, including ensuring that the service and sacrifice of fallen service men and women is recognised.</p>	<p align="center"><b>Green</b></p>	<p align="center">↔</p>	<p>Cabinet approved the plans to relocate Watford Museum to our historic Town Hall in December 2021. The developing designs were approved in November 2022 following a significant consultation exercise. The National Heritage Lottery Fund round 1 bid was submitted in November 2022 and a decision is expected in March 2023. Inflation continues to have an impact on many of our major projects, reflected by the amber status.</p>
	<p>49. Celebrate 100 years of Watford Borough, building a legacy for future generations</p>	<p>We will lead a programme of celebrations across the town commemorating 100 years since the formation of the borough of Watford.</p>	<p align="center"><b>Green</b></p>	<p align="center">↔</p>	<p>We are continuing our centenary celebrations. Centenary commemorative Council meeting photos have been taken. On Centenary Day, we held successful flag flying with local schools, visited 100-year old residents and held a community led Centenary Service. The 100 people nominations were completed and stories published through Q3 and into 2023. The end of year 100-year celebration exhibition was held at Watford Museum.</p>
	<p>50. Bring our local heritage to life for our community</p>	<p>We will create a new innovative heritage trail across the town to recognise Watford's rich culture and past.</p>	<p align="center"><b>Green</b></p>	<p align="center">↔</p>	<p>Our trial heritage trail was successfully launched in March 2022, providing a digitally interactive route along the High Street. Plans to extend this will be timed to align with new projects such as the Blue Plaque Scheme, which formed part of the Mayor's Manifesto and for which planning is underway. Our successful bid to the Heritage Lottery Fund also means that a heritage trail will form part of the 'Tales of the River' project.</p>
	<p>51. Enhance the town's creative and cultural appeal through a new Public Art Strategy</p>	<p>We will develop a Public Art Strategy for Watford, to explore how art in all its forms, can animate and enhance our public spaces, building on Watford's strong sense of identity and creativity and linking to improved wayfinding across the town.</p>	<p align="center"><b>Green</b></p>	<p align="center">↑</p>	<p>Recognising the importance of public art in attracting visitors to our High Street, work is well underway in the development of the Public Art Strategy for the town. Since the last update, consultation events have taken place with a total of 117 individuals consulted to date. Further consultation events are planned in January and the final consultation report will be delivered by end of January 2023. Feasibility work is to be completed to see if the River Colne's 'Tales of the River' artwork can be used to pilot the Strategy. It is expected that the strategy will be formally adopted in June 2023.</p>
	<p>52. Commemorate the town's links to our past</p>	<p>We will introduce a Blue Plaque scheme which will commemorate links between our historic buildings and famous residents, events or former buildings.</p>	<p align="center"><b>Planning in progress</b></p>	<p align="center">↔</p>	<p>This scheme will build on the 100 people who made Watford initiative. This provides a range of information on some of those Watfordonians who have made exceptional contributions to the town. The project has been scoped by looking at areas who have implemented similar schemes and understanding how learning could be applied to Watford.</p>

Commitment	Activity		BRAG' Rating	Trend	Headline
	53. Mark and reflect on Watford's response to COVID-19	We will install a public memorial providing a place for reflection and commemoration to build on the community spirit and recognising the outstanding work across the town during the COVID-19 pandemic.	Green	↑	Given the significant impact of the Covid-19 pandemic across the town, work continues to design a public memorial. A revised options paper will be presented to Portfolio Holders in April 2023 along with proposed timescales for completion.
	54. Enhance our town's historical features and character	We will develop a series of conservation management plans to enhance and protect the historical features, and character, of different areas across the town.	Green	↔	Recognising the importance of heritage in our town, over the last period, we have analysed the responses from the resident engagement on our Conservation Management Plans and drafted a set of proposed actions. Formal consultation will commence over the next period. This will include public meetings, an online survey and all residents and businesses in conversation areas will be engaged with. A final draft of the proposal is expected in the first quarter of 2023/24.
<b>Promote our welcoming and respectful town</b>	55. Ensure everyone feels welcome, included and safe in Watford	We will continue to make sure people feel welcome and safe in Watford, working closely with our partners to bid for funding that will support ways to have a positive impact on levels of violence against women and girls.	Amber	↔	The Community Safety Partnership (CSP) strategic plan for the next two years was approved at One Watford and reviewed by Overview and Scrutiny Committee. The Community Safety Action plan tracks the progress of community safety projects and deliverables set against the CSP priorities; Serious Youth Violence, Violence Against Women and Girls, Community Wellbeing and Reassure and Inform. The Joint Agencies Group members are successfully progressing through the action plan and opportunities for actions within core business and set against the CSP priorities included in the plan. Our Safer Streets bid was unsuccessful however we are considering a bid for Safer Streets round 5 and are in conversation with the PCC for smaller bid opportunities. Our bids to progress Violence Against Women and Girls environmental improvement aims identified in the original Safer Streets round 4, as well as Victoria passage to tackle hotspots in the town centre for ASB crime have been successful.
	56. Establish our commitment to the wellbeing of women and girls	We will deliver 'White Ribbon' accreditation for Watford Borough Council as a part of our ongoing commitment to tackle violence against women and girls, and continue our productive engagement with our One Watford partnership, which is bringing together all strands of this work across the town.	Green	↔	White Ribbon Day on 25 November 2022 was marked in Watford and linked to the Council achieving accreditation. A Steering Group has been established to take forward the Council's action plan and an update will be provided to One Watford in March 2023.
	57. Make sure our town remains clean and free from litter	We will trial a new mobile CCTV approach, as part of our overall CCTV review, which allows us to target litter and fly-tipping hotspots and obtain evidence so that we can prosecute offenders, helping to keep our streets clean and litter-free.	Amber	↔	A review of our CCTV provision has been completed. The remedial actions identified through this review are now being progressed. Mobile trial sites were partially delivered in December 2022 and discussions are planned for further deployment in January 2023. Over the next period, the focus will be on the relocation of the CCTV Control Room from Shady Lane.



Commitment	Activity		BRAG' Rating	Trend	Headline
	58. Develop a range of information and signposting to create a 'welcome to Watford' resource	We will develop a digital 'welcome to Watford' resource for new residents, setting out how they can be fully involved in the life of the town and make the most of Watford and all it has to offer.	Planning in progress	↔	This project is scheduled to commence in Q4 in line with the delivery of our recently approved Customer Experience Strategy.
Listen to and hear the diverse voices of Watford	59. Engage with our community to support better outcomes for our town and residents	We will develop our strategic approach, setting out how we will proactively work and engage with our community and our voluntary and community sector.	Planning in progress	↔	A Community and Participation Strategy is being drafted to provide strategic direction and action planning on a council-wide approach to how we engage with our community. During Quarter 3 the strategy has been developed for engagement with the community later in the year.
	60. Continue to engage with our community so we actively listen to their views and ideas	We will continue to run our Pensioners Forum to provide support, guidance and companionship for our older residents, who contribute so much to the life of our town.	Green	↔	Recognising the valuable contribution our elderly residents made to the town, and mindful of the additional support they may need, our Pensioners Forum continues to be held regularly, supported by Watford and Three Rivers Trust.
	61. Understand and support specific groups within our community	We will introduce a new Veterans Forum for ex-forces personnel, who have done so much for our town and country, building on our commitment to the Hertfordshire Armed Forces Covenant, which provides support between our civilian community and local Armed Forces community.	Planning in progress	↔	Following a clear commitment in the Mayor's Manifesto, this project will be reprofiled and scoped in Quarter 4. More widely, the council is actively engaging with the community through a range of forums and groups including the Sustainability Forum, Cycle Forum, Cost of Living Crisis Forum and Pensioners Forum and through key consultation and engagements – town centre framework, the future of Watford Museum, a public art strategy for Watford.
	62. Support the voluntary sector in Watford to provide positive outcomes for our residents	We will develop a new Voluntary Sector Commissioning Framework and work in partnership with charitable, community and voluntary organisations focused on helping our residents live healthy, happy and independent lives, understanding and meeting their needs through initiatives such as opening up the Town Hall to wider community use.	Green	↔	Cabinet has agreed to extend the Voluntary Sector Commissioning Framework for 1 year (2023/2024) to conduct a review of the commissioned organisation. This work stream is linked to the council's new community engagement and participation strategy that is in progress. This will help inform the review of the VSCF.
	63. Ensure our community buildings benefit local residents	We will work with our community tenants to ensure our community buildings are well maintained, and, that our buildings maximise the benefits for local people.	Green	↔	The stonework and roof repairs for Vicarage Road Cemetery are underway and due to be completed by end of January 2023. We are still waiting for the outcome of the Public Sector Decarbonisation Funding scheme bid which was submitted for three of our properties. A proposal to include Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) works within the programme was approved and we have appointed an EPC surveyor and initiated the surveys.
	64. Deliver our Equality and Diversity policy so it underpins what we do and how we engage with our community	We will develop an Equality and Diversity policy for Watford, making sure it reflects our diverse town and our commitment to being a place where everyone can thrive.	Green	↔	The Census 2021 figures have been released which will underpin the council's approach to its Equality and Diversity policy. Scoping for the policy was undertaken in Quarter 3 and a draft is being developed during Quarter 4.

Commitment	Activity		BRAG' Rating	Trend	Headline
	65. Work with partners to end rough sleeping on the streets of Watford	We will continue to deliver our Homelessness Strategy for Watford, reviewing this on an annual basis and adapting it regularly to ensure that it remains innovative and effective, supporting our target of minimising rough sleepers on the streets of Watford.	<b>Green</b>	↔	Significant progress has been made to reduce homelessness across the town in the last few years. The review of the homelessness strategy, which will ensure the Action Plan aligns with the government's latest Rough Sleeping Strategy published in September 2022, commenced in Autumn 2022. The Review is to be completed in quarter 4 of 2023/24.
	66. Encourage Watford to develop as an age friendly town	We will work towards making Watford an age-friendly town which residents and visitors of all ages can enjoy, ensuring local services are accessible to and inclusive of older people with varying needs and capacities.	<b>Planning in progress</b>	↔	The scope of work is being considered and how this relates to design guidance. Hertfordshire County Council has completed a draft study to update evidence related to provision for people with disabilities and for the elderly. This is useful for supporting local housing and planning guidance.
	67. Tackle digital isolation so residents can effectively engage using new technology	We will work with our partners, volunteers and community groups to support residents who do not have access to technology, choose not to do so or do not currently have the skills to use IT so that they have the same opportunities as others in our town.	<b>Green</b>	↔	As part of the staying connected project, for which Watford is the county lead, a digital recycling scheme is now in place with residents able to drop off old devices for use by those who cannot afford to buy new technology, further supporting residents impacted by the cost of living crisis.
<b>Support improved health and wellbeing across the town</b>	68. Develop services to support our residents' health and wellbeing	We will work closely with our partners to develop a mental health strategy for Watford, ensuring the right support is available for residents who need it. Watford's Healthy Hub will provide a pivotal link to assistance and guidance, including opening up conversations about the menopause and for those needing help with mental health issues.	<b>Green</b>	↔	<p>Following a successful procurement process for a scoping exercise on mental health services in Watford, Prego Services has been awarded the contract for the Mental Health Assessment of Watford.</p> <p>We have linked in with the Healthy Hub for provision of events, pop ups, promotions, etc. We have engaged with Muslim women who feel isolated and have started a ladies-only badminton session which has proven very popular. We have also referred 6 MIND clients to Everyone Active for a free 12 months' gym membership.</p> <p>We have secured funding from the WCH Community Development Fund for the continuation of a full time Mental Health Community Support Worker. We have secured additional funding to enable 3 Satellite Hubs to continue: 'Think About Living with Dementia', 'Palliative Care' and 'Bereavement Programme'.</p> <p>We have completed a Service Level Agreement for a Diabetes lifestyle project in partnership with Watford Primary Care Network which will target individuals from the BAME community. We have opened up the physical Healthy Hub in the Town Hall one day per week for the Watford Women's Centre. We have also booked NHS Health checks with Herts Health Improvement team and have completed a Job Description and job evaluation for the Healthy Hub project worker.</p>

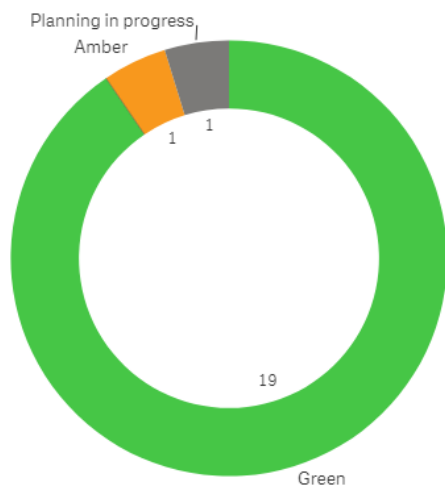
Commitment	Activity	BRAG' Rating	Trend	Headline	
	69. Engage with health partners to improve public health and health inequalities for our residents	We will engage across our health partners to make sure the health and wellbeing needs of Watford are represented in new health structures and commissioning of services.	Green	↔	The Health Intervention Plan has been revised to reflect placed based health inequalities for cancer and we are awaiting feedback from Hertfordshire County Council. Reducing cancer across all Watford residents remains a priority and we continue to work closely with Primary Care Networks, non-statutory services and public health leads to address barriers that hinders early intervention and access to cancer services. A project is being discussed to address the disparity in rate of cervical screening for younger cohort of women, as well as in specific communities where uptake is particularly low. Addressing the relationship between population health and deprivation identified that obesity, especially childhood obesity in Watford is of concern. A pilot project to look at improving healthier lifestyle for families in an area of high deprivation with highest level of childhood obesity is currently being developed.
	70. Support single homeless people to access accommodation and support	We will continue to establish and embed our single homelessness pathway, focusing on the root causes of homelessness and working closely with our partners to support individuals on every part of their journey into independent living.	Green	↑	<p>Since the last update, we have successfully recruited an experienced Single Homelessness Pathway (SHP) Coordinator to drive forward SHP in the business as usual environment and we have allocated additional resource (Housing Strategy Manager) to support this workstream. The Winter Shelter in Watford was used during the pre-Christmas cold spell and we have been able to verify seven rough sleepers. HCC are looking to extend the Housing Related Support funding contracts until April 2024, which would enable funding to be increased to assist providers with inflationary pressures.</p> <p>We have initiated a Strengthening Housing project to progress the findings of a peer review and equip our Housing Team with the requisite capacity and resource to design and deliver improvements.</p>
Bring together ways to help our residents who might be struggling financially	71. Make sure residents are aware of what help we offer to support them manage their finances	We will promote our council tax discount scheme so residents know support might be available to help them pay their bills.	Green	↔	We no longer require customers to complete a claim form for council tax reduction where they are in receipt of Universal Credit. We promote the scheme at all contacts with customers on the telephone or at the customer centre. We have a dedicated officer to provide help for customers complete an online form if required.
	72. Coordinate advice in the town for those seeking information on how to cope with the cost of living crisis	We will work with partners to ensure people can access the advice and information they need when they face financial difficulties, particularly those who are vulnerable or are dealing with debt.	Green	↔	The Cost of Living Forum was convened with local voluntary and community organisations to work together on a response for Watford. Partners are collaborating to make sure support is coordinated. We are engaging with Hertfordshire County Council to link into county support and ensure local residents are accessing all the help available. Watford has established 'Welcoming Spaces' for the winter months.

Commitment	Activity		BRAG' Rating	Trend	Headline
	73. Use innovative ways to support our local community financially	We will build upon the success of our COVID-19 Fund, Ukraine Community Funds and Watford Community Fund to investigate a new local lottery to support our local community so that they can continue their good work in our town.	Green	↔	There are a number of local lottery formats adopted across other areas that we have explored for Watford. A project proposal presented to Cabinet in January 2023 was approved and we are currently planning the project in detail for launch later this year in order to support community organisations across the town
	74. Welcome the whole town and visitors to our Big Events	We will deliver our exciting, free programme of Big Events across the town, including our Big Screen, Big Beach and Fireworks, bringing our community together regularly in our town centre and parks.	Green	↔	The Big Beach and Big Screen events were both successful, with the latter attracting 4k visitors. The Big Sports event was also held in Quarter 2. The fireworks display attracted circa 30k people and raised funds for local charities. Planning is underway for events throughout 2023.
	75. Provide an appealing and lively programme of holiday activities for young people	We will continue to offer our young people exciting things to do during the Easter and summer holidays so they can be engaged and involved in an enjoyable range of free activities.	Green	↔	We have delivered a free Easter and summer holiday programme and have received very positive feedback on the summer programme, with more children attending than in previous years. The Cost of Living Forum with groups and organisations was convened to bring together the support available and to make sure local people are aware of where to go for help. This will include making sure people are aware of the benefits they are entitled to, including those administered by the council. The forum is also bringing together data and information to build understanding of the extent of the crisis within Watford and make sure Watford is coordinating with county, regional and national support and campaigns. Watford launched its 'Welcoming Places' campaign for winter, supported by the Watford Community Fund. We have received Household Support Fund 3 which will be allocated in Quarter 4. Initial meetings with invited community groups and organisations were held in Q2 with a robust action plan developed.
	76. Improve private sector housing across the town, focusing on how it can contribute to both environmental and community benefits	We will support the sustainability of the town's privately owned homes making use of Energy Company Obligation funding to improve the energy efficiency and warmth of those who are vulnerable or on low incomes.	Green	↔	We are now starting ECO delivery through to the end of the scheme in March 2026. Targeted marketing has taken place and follow up letters are about to be sent having progressed the partnership administration with E.ON. Processes to progress ECO directly with installers via our partners at National Energy Foundation have been set up and our statement of intent has been issued in accordance with the revised government guidance. We are awaiting further ECO+ guidance in spring 2023 and will adapt our own assistance to reflect these changes once known.
	77. Help our community better access the benefits of Watford's economic growth	We will explore ways to create a resilient and inclusive economy that benefits our community, building on foundations from the Hertfordshire Community Wealth Building project, linking local people with opportunities and supporting our voluntary, community and social enterprise (VCSE)	Green	↑	Following the approval of the Council Plan 2022-26 and our Economic Growth Strategy, planning is underway to develop and deliver a community wealth building plan which helps our communities – both business and resident communities – benefit more from the investment. The Community Wealth Building plan is currently being drafted with input from partners and businesses. It includes a proposal for a Watford Employer Charter which encourages businesses to invest locally. The plan will be reviewed by a business panel before being finalised.

Commitment	Activity	BRAG' Rating	Trend	Headline
	sector link to make a greater economic contribution.			

## THEME: A council working for our community and serving our residents

### Overview



### Key achievements over this period

- The Council's Customer Experience Strategy 2022-26 and Delivery Plan have been approved and implemented commence to ensure that we continue to deliver the very best services for our residents and community.
- The Building Control and Planning Enforcement Shared Services with St Albans City District Council went live from 1 November 2022. The implementation of the Legal Shared Services is well underway with implementation scheduled for 1 February 2023, ensuring that we continue to delivery high quality but efficient services.





Planning is underway for the 2023 Borough Ward Elections and will be implementing the changes introduced by the Elections Act 2022 such as Voter ID, with town-wide communications planned.

- Our updated Procurement Strategy was approved by Cabinet in January 2023.
- Further health, wellbeing and resilience training courses as well as a menopause and cost of living sessions have been rolled out to support our employees and partners.

Commitment	Activity		BRAG' Rating	Trend	Headline
<p><b>Make sure we deliver an outstanding customer experience and the high quality services our community expects</b></p>	<p>78. Provide an excellent customer experience for everyone who engages with the council</p>	<p>We will prepare and deliver a new Customer Experience Strategy to transform how we engage with our customers over the next four years, delivering a real step change across all our services, embracing innovation and embedding a first class experience our customers will value.</p>	<p><b>Green</b></p>	<p>↔</p>	<p>The council's Customer Experience Strategy 2022-26 was approved by Cabinet in November 2022. The Strategy aims to ensure that we engage with and provide the best service for our customers whether they be residents, businesses, community groups or partners and so will help to inform the Customer Engagement Review. Over the last period, the Delivery Project Plan has been developed in conjunction with our Enterprise Programme Management Office, with the programme governance now established. The delivery of the Strategy will be overseen by Overview and Scrutiny Committee.</p>
	<p>79. Champion a greener and more sustainable council that strives to reduce our carbon footprint</p>	<p>We will embed our ambition to be net carbon neutral by 2030 by continuing to deliver our organisational Sustainability Action Plan so that it intrinsic to everything and ensures we reduce our carbon footprint in line with our green goals.</p>	<p><b>Green</b></p>	<p>↔</p>	<p>The council continues to lead by example to deliver our organisational Environmental Strategy and associated Sustainability Action Plan. The public consultation period is now complete and we will be reviewing the strategic targets for the council and the Borough. Internally, initial discussions have taken place on the introduction of Sustainability Champions and we have also explored e-learning modules for WBC staff. We are continuing to work with our property management company Lambert Smith Hamilton to embed sustainability in our investment portfolio.</p>
	<p>80. Focus the right resources in the right places to secure future success</p>	<p>We will review how we employ our resources (including staff and finances) to make sure they are focussed on the areas which are most important to the council and support the delivery of this Plan.</p>	<p><b>Green</b></p>	<p>↔</p>	<p>We continue to deliver the commitments made in the Council Plan under the new senior management structure. The Organisational Development Strategy (updated in Appendix B) continues to ensure that we continue to support staff to develop and grow and the review of our next tier of management, to align with the restructured senior leadership team is now underway.</p>
	<p>81. Explore opportunities to share services with other councils where it delivers best value and better customer outcomes</p>	<p>We will work with other authorities to develop and implement business cases that explore opportunities to share more services where this will deliver improvements for our customers.</p>	<p><b>Green</b></p>	<p>↔</p>	<p>The council remains committed to deliver best value and efficient services through the implementation of shared services with our neighbouring boroughs. The Building Control and Planning Enforcement Shared Services with St Albans City District Council (SADC) officially went live on 1 November 2022. The WBC and SADC Partnership Board has been established and the first meeting held in December 2022. Planning Enforcement remediation activities are underway.  The implementation of the Legal Shared Service project, being led by SADC, is progressing well and go-live is now expected in February 2023 (a minor delay from the original go-live date). The Head of Legal has been recruited and the TUPE process and procedural arrangements will be progressed in the next quarter.</p>

Commitment	Activity		BRAG' Rating	Trend	Headline
	82. Make sure the council continues to hold successful and well run elections	We will support and prepare for the implementation of the Elections Act 2022 so that our elections continue to be effectively managed and voters are well informed on elections and how to exercise their right to vote.	Green	↑	Secondary legislation for several policy areas in connection with Elections Act 2022 has now been made, including assistance with voting for people with disabilities (i.e., accessibility), voter identification, First Past the Post, and around Notional Expenditure. Remaining expected Election Integrity Programme secondary legislation is due to follow from 2023 to 2025 although all implementation dates remain subject to change.
Pioneer new ways of working that challenge us to innovate, transform and consistently improve	83. Adopt the right digital technology that matches and supports our ambition for excellent service delivery for our residents	We will develop and deliver a new four-year ICT strategy to drive forward how we use ICT and digital technology to deliver our ambitions, seeking opportunities to innovate to meet the needs of the council and our community.	Green	↔	Work on the ICT Strategy has commenced and the draft is expected to be completed in Q4 and sign off process will occur through Q1/Q2 of 2023/2024. Through the IT service transformation programme the council's IT team are continuing to improve our ICT and digital technology to meet the ongoing needs of the council and community. Migration to Office 365 commenced which will enhance the council's ability to work remotely, securely, collaboratively and support agile working. The O365 user mailbox migration is now complete and we are progressing public mailbox migration.
	84. Deliver a step change in how we use our data and information so it strengthens our drive for constant improvement	We will improve how we use our data and information to challenge our decisions, enhance performance and support excellent customer experience, using our information to monitor service delivery and to drive action if something needs improving.	Green	↔	We are continuing to maintain and enhance use of the Business Intelligence platform to support the council's decision making process and improve performance across the organisation. Integration of the platform with key management systems within the council such as the HR management system to deliver real time and relevant data and information is enabling informed decision making. Work on the Business Intelligence Strategy is underway and is expected to be presented to Cabinet for endorsement in March 2023.
	85. Strengthen our approach to contract management to ensure we are making the most of our contracts and that they are delivering for us and the town	We will implement a robust contract management framework to ensure we deliver expected outcomes and excellent value for money from our contracts, providing the best service for our customers.	Green	↑	Good progress has been made in the review of our existing contract management approaches. The review will ensure that we continue to achieve the very best value from our contracts. The first draft of the new 'Contract Management' handbook for officers is now complete and will be available on the Council's website by February 2023. A training programme will be published on the intranet and offered to officers to support them with the new guidance.
	86. Embed social value through our procurement process	We will update our Procurement Strategy to strengthen our approach to evidencing economic, social and environmental outcomes when procuring, awarding and delivering contracts.	Green	↑	Our updated Procurement Strategy, which will make sure we continue to get best value from the market during this period of economic instability, was reviewed internally and approved by Cabinet in January 2023. The Strategy will include a comprehensive proposal on social value and measurement which supports the delivery of our Sustainability Action Plan.



Commitment	Activity		BRAG' Rating	Trend	Headline
<b>Focus and challenge how we manage our budget so it is concentrated on delivering our commitments and securing greater investment for Watford</b>	87. Ensure our investment portfolio is ambitious and effectively managed to deliver maximum value to the council	We will ensure that we are actively managing our investment portfolio, including exploring new opportunities to protect our income, manage risk and maximise value over the longer term, so that we can continue to provide high quality services to our residents and businesses.	<b>Green</b>		We have agreed 4 long leasehold extensions on Watford Business Park (WBP) which generated capital receipts in excess of £1.5m and secured rental income (with rent review protection) for the medium to long term. We are continuing to utilise the council's existing land bank to generate further income through development. Examples include the Gateway site at WBP and the Riverwell Multi-Storey Car Park. Our out of Borough Assets are continuing to perform well, including the Coleshill Industrial Estate rents which have grown from £6.50 psf to £7.50 psf in the last twelve months with all income used to support the delivery of our corporate priorities as outlined within the Council Plan. We are progressing development of the Croxley Park Business Plan 2023/24 which is expected to be completed in March 2023.
	88. Assess the feasibility of a Growth Fund and its benefits for Watford	We will explore where our financial strength can support start-up and growth opportunities delivering a positive investment return for the council and renewed prosperity for the town.	<b>Planning in progress</b>		The Council has set aside £500k towards a Growth Fund. As part of our bid to central government's Levelling Up Fund (LUF), a further £500k was requested to complement the Innovation Hub initiative. This would have allowed a £1m fund to be set up to support businesses in the Hub, through a grants and loan scheme to enable them to access funding that they would otherwise not easily be able to obtain, in order to develop their businesses and support the local economy. However, the recent announcement that the council were unsuccessful in their bid means that this initiative will continue on a smaller scale whilst details of Levelling Up round three funding are finalised.
	89. Manage and direct the council finances effectively	We will ensure that our budgets align with our priorities and that budget management is robust, forward-looking and supports the best possible service outcomes from available resources, enabling us to keep council tax increases below inflation.	<b>Green</b>		The 2022/23 budget included a Council Tax increase of 1.5%, well below inflation. The Council proactively manages and monitors budgets during the year to ensure value for money and effective prioritisation of resources. The 2023/24 budget setting process has now begun and will ensure that council resources continue to align to council priorities to deliver the best possible service outcomes. The proposed MTFs includes an expected increase in council tax of 2.99% for 2023/24 and 2024/25, reducing to 1.99% in 2025/26. This is well below current levels of inflation. The proposed increases balance the need to fund budget pressures to continue to deliver services against the commitment to keep council tax increases low. The provisional Local Government Finance Settlement set out the referendum limit for council tax increases as 3% for 2023/24 and 2024/25.
	90. Identify new commercial opportunities that align with our ambition	We will look for new and innovative commercial opportunities that will align to our values, whilst ensuring a financial return that can be used to support the council's activities for the benefit of the borough.	<b>Green</b>		The strategic outline case for a Vertical Farm was reviewed by members in the last quarter however following further review it is unlikely that the scheme will not proceed due to sustainability reasons. We are however still exploring opportunities for solar arrays.

Commitment	Activity		BRAG' Rating	Trend	Headline
	91. Manage our ambitious capital programme so that it supports our aspirations	We will develop a commercial risk and mitigation strategy for our capital programme to protect the council against turbulence in global markets, whilst still delivering our ambitious programme of improvements.	Amber	↔	The rapid and significant increase in inflation poses significant risks to the affordability of the Capital Investment Programme. The greatest exposure is to projects that are at the pre-tender stage where the council has not yet entered into contract. Where possible, mitigations are in place such as the early purchase of materials to protect against future price rises. The council also continues to seek advice and future market information from Employers Agents working on our major capital programmes.
	92. Invest our Croxley Park funds in ethical investments	We will make sure the funds we receive from Croxley Park are invested in a sustainable way to deliver financial goals and better future for us all.	Green	↔	Funds from the Croxley Park investment are placed with the Royal London Sustainable Diversified Trust Fund and Royal London Sustainable Managed Growth Trust Fund with the aim to provide capital growth that will maintain the value of the investment in line with inflation. The performance of these funds is monitored by the Property Investment Board and reported through the Council's budget monitoring report, with income utilised to deliver our corporate priorities as outlined within the Council Plan.
Lead by example, securing our reputation as a forward thinking, caring and inspiring organisation where staff can thrive and achieve their best for our residents and businesses	93. Build on our innovative approach to agile working, realising the benefits for our staff and our community	We will ensure our staff are able to provide timely high quality and efficient services to customers by opening up opportunities for staff to work in an agile way in a modern, collaborative and inspiring workplace, helping the council to become an employer of choice.	Green	↔	The council's new collaborative and focused working space opened in July 2022, providing a modern and fit for purpose space for teams to deliver the very best services to residents, businesses and the community. To ensure the working space remains fit for purpose, we are regularly conducting staff survey to collate feedback on both the space and technology and implementing changes as required.
	94. Secure robust succession planning, making sure we value and manage our talent to recruit and retain the best for Watford	We will open up opportunities for our staff to grow and develop, building their skills and knowledge to achieve. Where we do recruit, we will appoint the best, ensuring we recruit people with the right experience and behaviours to be part of 'Team Watford'.	Green	↔	The Values and Behaviours, which set out the expected behaviours for 'Team Watford', ensuring that we provide the best service to our residents, businesses and community, were launched in December 2022 alongside the behavioural framework. The next stage is to fully roll the values and behaviours across the Council and incorporate them into each stage of the employee lifecycle. The PDR cycle is now complete with every employee having an opportunity to set objectives for the year ahead and identify development.

Commitment	Activity		BRAG' Rating	Trend	Headline
	95. Embed our values and behaviours so they inspire our staff to achieve even more and underpin how we work	We will collaboratively develop meaningful corporate values and behaviours with our staff and use these as the foundation to implement a behaviours framework. This will help develop the skills of our people at all levels, and from all backgrounds, to recognise individual contributions, expertise and knowledge and to improve the resident and customer focused services we deliver.	Green	↔	The Values and Behavioural Framework, which was presented to Corporate Management Team in July, was reviewed by the Staff Ambassador Group and Agile Pathfinders in October 2022 and feedback collated. A soft launch of the Values and Behaviours was completed in December 2022 and a full roll out is planned for early 2023.
	96. Refresh our Organisational Development approach so that it effectively underpins and supports our Council Plan	We will ensure we develop, motivate and inspire our staff so they are supported and empowered to do their best for our residents and businesses by refreshing our Organisational Development approach.	Green	↔	Our refreshed Values and Behavioural Framework will be worked into the employment lifecycle from recruitment and onboarding to development and progression. A soft launch of the framework was completed in December 2022 and a full rollout is planned for early 2023.
	97. Seek and implement opportunities for people to have fulfilling local government careers	We will create apprenticeship opportunities for local people at the beginning of their working life, providing them with experience, skills and knowledge from across the council to help kick start their careers.	Green	↔	In order to support local people, and particularly our younger residents, we have recruited two Corporate Apprentices to join us on a two-year programme, working with services from across the organisation to provide them with the skills, knowledge and experience to help start their careers, whilst providing valuable public services to our customers. We are aiming to support more local people by recruiting a further four Corporate Apprentices in the next quarter, although this will be dependent on funding availability.
	98. Protect the physical and mental health and wellbeing of our staff	We will ensure that we protect the physical and mental health and wellbeing of our staff by developing their resilience and providing opportunities for genuine two-way engagement	Green	↔	Further health, wellbeing and resilience training courses were delivered in the last quarter as well as a menopause workshop and cost of living session, to support our employees. The Performance and Development Review cycle is now complete and gave line managers an opportunity to support employees and discuss health and wellbeing with them.

## Organisational Development Strategy 2020-24 2022/2023 Q3 Progress Update

### Theme 1 – Workforce Health and Wellbeing

#### Key Achievements over last period

- Health, Wellbeing and Resilience workshops continued to be delivered to employees
- Fully booked Menopause Awareness workshops were delivered
- As the cost of living crisis came to the forefront, the Citizens Advice Bureau delivered a session to support employees at this time, with a further session planned for 2023
- The new values were launched in December with full implementation planned for 2023.

#### Theme BRAG Analysis

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BRAG rating	Key	Total number in theme
Completed	Completed	10
On track	On track	3
At risk	At risk	0
Issues	Issues	0
	Delivery reviewed as a result of external influences	0
<b>Total</b>		<b>13</b>

COMMITMENT	Key Milestones	'RAG' Rating	Update
Focus on tackling stigma associated with mental health			
Take steps to improve the number of managers who feel confident to spot the	All managers to be trained in how to spot signs of mental health issues with	Completed	7 dates were arranged in November / December 2020 with the majority of managers having attended

<p>early warning signs of mental health and have the skills to manage those conversations</p>	<p>Remploy providing relevant training course which will consist of 2 x 2hr on-line face to face group training.</p>			<p>specialist training by January 2021. Since then further sessions have been held and future sessions will be arranged subject to demand and sufficient numbers attending.</p>
<p>Mental health first aid training for colleagues, enabling them to spot the signs and offer support.</p>	<p>Mental Health First Aiders (MHFA) to be accessible.</p>		<p>Completed</p>	<p>On-line e-learning courses available to all staff together with an online consulting tool. Additional volunteers for MHFA have been identified, signed up and received training. Further support for staff is available through Remploy and the staff intranet updated with details.</p>
<p>Tackle stigma around mental health issues or declaring a disability by encouraging open conversations</p>	<p>Increase awareness of policies and use of on-line material to ensure staff have knowledge to recognise when help is required.</p>		<p>Completed</p>	<p>Regular and ongoing communication relating to mental health issued and planned. Intranet contains a wealth of information which is regularly updated. Additional funding received from government and our Mental Health Champions are in the process of reviewing different options. We will continue to liaise with Mental Health Champions and First Aiders to recognise the individual needs of employees who may be reluctant to share concerns.</p>

<b>COMMITMENT</b> Support personal and professional growth in health subjects		<b>Key Milestones</b>	<b>'RAG' Rating</b>	<b>Update</b>
Continue to grow and develop "Watford Health and You" resources.	Intranet pages to be updated with information on a regular basis.		Completed	The intranet information is reviewed on a monthly basis and updates added for staff.
Create and publicise a range of opportunities to learn and build good habits on health and wellbeing topics so our people can access e-learning and interactive, habit changing sessions. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Factors affecting wellbeing at work (control and autonomy)</li> <li>- Food, sleep and exercise</li> <li>- Financial health</li> </ul>	Identify e-learning opportunities and ensure they are advertised and accessible via the i-Learn platform		Completed	New resources are constantly being identified and added to our library accessible through the intranet. Communications sent out to staff regarding the new material available.
Use focus groups to develop a health and wellbeing programme – with access to a number of health and improvement areas.	Design and launch a programme with feedback from group Ensure there is resilience and a feeling of wellbeing amongst staff, as measured by Wellbeing Survey Increased staff satisfaction and motivation as measured by staff survey	By Jan 2023	On track	Health, Wellbeing and Resilience workshops were delivered within Q3. Feedback from those who attended was very positive and participants came away knowing where to access help if required as well as spot signs in others. In addition, a cost of living session was delivered by the CAB to support our employees in these challenging financial times. Another fully booked menopause workshop was delivered in partnership with Unison, again with very positive feedback.

<b>COMMITMENT</b> Ensure our occupational health and employee assistance offering is high quality and accessible to all		<b>Key Milestones</b>	<b>'RAG' Rating</b>	<b>Update</b>
Continued promotion of the benefits of the Employee Assistance Programme and Occupational Health services.	Regular ongoing communication to take place to ensure all staff are aware of external support that is available.	By 1 April 2021	Completed	Intranet resources are regularly updated and communication for staff pointing to these resources.

<b>COMMITMENT</b> Craft great roles where our people feel in control over the best way to deliver their work and feel well supported to do so		<b>Key Milestones</b>	<b>'RAG' Rating</b>	<b>Update</b>
<p>Ensure that all of our people have access to "job crafting" training, so that they can develop skills to enhance flow, productivity, engagement and wellbeing.</p> <p>In this context Job Crafting is linked to leadership development to help employees to think through productivity enhancement and flow of work to team members, recognising that the job might be the same, but that people might approach the task in very different ways - in its simplest form, some people prefer to work early, and others prefer to work late.</p>	Develop a process whereby employees have an opportunity to review the effectiveness of their role so that they can learn how to identify improvements and any new skills required	By March 2023	On track	Work to be fully scoped so that it also links in with Values and Behaviours project which was launched towards the end of 2022 with full rollout planned for 2023. The 'Management Fundamentals' course is now complete with future courses to incorporate the new values and behaviours. The behavioural framework is in the final stages of review, and the plan is to ensure relevant focus groups from across the Council can ensure it is relevant to every job role.
Ensure our leadership programmes emphasise the importance of engaging and co-designing work so all of our people feel able to contribute new ideas and instigate new and better ways of doing things	Key competencies to be identified and incorporated into updated Leadership Programme	By 1 October 2022	Completed	Final values have now been agreed and the behavioural framework structure is confirmed. 'Together' being one of the core values with

<b>COMMITMENT</b> Craft great roles where our people feel in control over the best way to deliver their work and feel well supported to do so		<b>Key Milestones</b>	<b>'RAG' Rating</b>	<b>Update</b>
				emphasis on collaboration and valuing different perspectives.
Support teams to regularly pause and reflect on their work. Discussions should be around how to optimise team effectiveness and create a psychologically safe workspace	Develop a pro-forma to be used in team discussion to identify team successes and process improvement opportunities. Staff Ambassador Group to review in first instance	By September 2022	Completed	Review of agile charters has given teams the opportunity to consider their effectiveness and their outputs. The health and wellbeing workshops provided a proforma and asked all participants to consider how they were personally as they worked through change.
<b>COMMITMENT</b> Champion physical health		<b>Key Milestones</b>	<b>'RAG' Rating</b>	<b>Update</b>
Adopt Public Health England workplace health standards and refresh our HR policies.	Review policies and procedures to ensure they are compliant with standards Ensure managers are confident in the support they can give their teams Benchmark our standards against other organisations	By January 2022	On track	The agile working policy and smarter working policy have now been written. They are being reviewed externally as well as by Corporate Management Board before publishing.
Evaluation of pilot health check programme (environmental health)	Gain feedback from provider on common issues that need to be addressed		Completed	Pilot took place in June 2020 with approx. 50% take up by staff. Whilst some elements were positive, overall feedback indicated this was not an approach for Watford to take forward currently.



COMMITMENT Champion physical health		Key Milestones	'RAG' Rating	Update
Rollout of health check programme across the wider council	Collate and analyse anonymised data from system to identify any trends.		Completed	'Wellbeing with CARI' rolled out to all staff in July 2020. Links to assessment have been added to all Mental Health and Wellbeing newsletters. Whilst CARI had some benefits, overall the feedback from staff was limited and, with other support in place, we are not taking the initiative forward.

## Theme 2 – An Organisation Driven by Values and Behaviours

We are now in a positive position with values confirmed and a structure for the behaviour framework agreed. Both the Corporate Management Team as well as employee groups (Staff Ambassadors Group & Agile Pathfinders) have reviewed and fed back on the final version. The soft launch of values took place in December 2022.

The exciting challenge is now to roll these out to employees across the Council, and the detailed planning is underway.

BRAG rating	Key	Total number in theme
	Completed	6
	On track	6
	At risk	0
	Issues	0
	Delivery being reviewed as a result of external influences	3
<b>Total</b>		<b>15</b>

<b>COMMITMENT</b> Work with staff and stakeholder to create our values and behaviours		<b>Key Milestones</b>	<b>'RAG' Rating</b>	<b>Update</b>
Workshops to be arranged with Cabinet and SLT, with input from Ambassadors Group.	Workshops to review teamwork within Leadership Team and agree Values and behaviours required for effective working. Workshops to be held face to face.	September 2022	Completed	The Corporate Management Team, Staff Ambassadors Group and Agile Pathfinders all reviewed the final version of the values and behavioural framework. Feedback was taken on board and incorporated. Cabinet were introduced to the new values and behaviours in early October.
Staff Ambassadors Group to take part in meetings to feedback	Group is established and working	October 2022	Completed	Staff Ambassador Group is an established network and last met in October to review the annexe space, as well as review the values and behaviours. This meeting was well attended with valuable feedback captured on the day.
Design, schedule and facilitate focus groups and drop-in sessions using a range of digital and face to face channels, providing a forum for employees to contribute and shape the values and behaviours they believe are important to the Council	Workshops to be attended by majority of staff who will be able to propose both the Values and Behaviours they see as important for the benefit of effective working.		Completed	Workshops took place between March and April 2022 facilitated by external support. Workshops were held across a number of dates and times to ensure all staff had an opportunity to attend and contribute their views
Listen, reflect upon and incorporate the views of under- represented workforce groups within the Council, building on our representation as an inclusive employer, ensuring that our values and behaviours work for all.	Identify those individuals who have not had the opportunity to take part in workshop and seek their views through telephone consultation.		Completed	Staff who were not able to attend were encouraged to pass their views on to a colleague or manager to contribute at a session on their behalf. Extra sessions were scheduled to take into account school holidays and different working hours

Carry out meetings with Cabinet members and LT to shape values and behaviours that align to our organisational ambitions and goals as set out in our Council Plan	Summary of key Values and Behaviours, as suggested by employees, and approved by LT to be discussed and shared with UNISON.	September 2022	Completed	Final values and behaviours agreed and aligned to the Council's ambition for its people.
Summarise and present key themes from engagement sessions, incorporating them into an all staff communication.	Summary of key Values and Behaviours, as suggested by employees to be published together with timetable of implementation.	December 2022	On track	A soft launch of the 6 values took place in December 2022. An implementation programme to embed these values and behaviours will commence from 2023.

<b>COMMITMENT</b>		<b>Key Milestones</b>	<b>'RAG' Rating</b>	<b>Update</b>
We will make sure our leaders embody the values and behaviours in everything they do				
Design and deliver a senior leadership development programme for the council's 1 <sup>st</sup> and 2 <sup>nd</sup> tier leaders, aligned to the values and aimed at supporting positive role modelling of behaviours in leadership	Content to include information relating to Performance Review and Check-in meetings and the need for all staff to review not only what has been achieved but how it was achieved including reviewing behaviours displayed.	September 2022	Completed	External consultants facilitated the Corporate Management Board away day following the senior management restructure. New expectations were set out in light of the agreed values & behaviours
'Watford Leads' development course will build management skills and confidence amongst all team managers and leaders (3 <sup>rd</sup> tier managers), centred around the values and behaviours	Liaise with suppliers to ensure workshop content makes reference to Values and Behaviours and how this forms part of everyday management	March 2023	On track	The management development course completed in Q3 was well received and participants now have some updated skills to use in their everyday people management role. Moving into 2023, the values and behaviours will need to underpin all aspects of management and leadership courses. Delivery of these courses will follow on from the tier 4 restructure.

<b>COMMITMENT</b> Launch our values and behaviours		<b>Key Milestones</b>	<b>'RAG' Rating</b>	<b>Update</b>
Rollout of values and behaviours across every aspect of the employee journey, including, with input from Staff Ambassadors:	Identify all "touch points" from Recruitment to leaving including internal job application process where there is an opportunity to refer to our Values and Behaviours.	May 2023	On track	Implementation plan to be scoped in January to embed our values and behaviours from 2023.
Create an organisational launch and series of local team engagement events	Lunch and Learn sessions designed for all staff on understanding how to embed values and behaviours in everything we do.	January 2023	On track	Comms plan as part of the implementation plan (above) to be rolled out following on from agreement of implementation plan.
Demonstration of how the values and behaviours support the delivery of these priorities	Each department to produce a case study of improvements that can be made to their service incorporating new ways of working.	July 2023	Delivery re-profiled	As launch of values and behaviours is proposed to be delayed to April 2023 due to other priorities, each service area will require some time after this date to consider the impact and how they can be incorporated into the service area. In the meantime, scoping and planning work is to be undertaken in January 2023 in preparation of the Council-wide launch.
Refresh our Internal Communications and Engagement Strategy and align it to the council's Council Plan by improving the cascade of strategic updates, recognition of success.	Internal communications to specifically link values and behaviours to messages.	March 2023	On track	Values and behaviours to be 'branded' so they are memorable and land with employees in a positive way each time they see them. Link to comms the values should underpin everything we do in the Council. This can be done as part of the preparation workshops taking place now.

<b>COMMITMENT</b> Embed our values and behaviours so that they are 'lived not laminated'		<b>Key Milestones</b>	<b>'RAG' Rating</b>	<b>Update</b>
Embed our Council values and behaviours through workshops and celebrating successes, reaching every single employee; with values included in every process from recruitment through to annual reviews.	All interactions to include reference to our values and behaviours and how they will impact the interaction.	April 2023 – implementation plan finalised. Fully embedding the values and behaviours expected to be ongoing and evolving	On track	Implementation plan to be written with all employee interactions in mind. Employees to have an input on communicating how each employee can demonstrate the values on a daily basis. Senior leaders to model the values and expected behaviours as well as all employees using the behavioural framework to reference what is excellent behaviour. Implementation plan starting to be scoped in January 2023
Review of people policies and processes to reflect desired values and behaviours	All policies to be reviewed to ensure they are aligned to our Values and Behaviours	May 2022	Delivery Reprofiled	Approach to implementation will be written to incorporate whole employee lifecycle and review of polices within this lifecycle.

<b>COMMITMENT</b> Reward those who exemplify our values and behaviours		<b>Key Milestones</b>	<b>'RAG' Rating</b>	<b>Update</b>
Develop a reward programme that focuses on ways the council can improve it services to both internal and external customers whilst exemplifying our Values and Behaviours.	The review will consider both monetary (including the team recognition reward) and non-monetary recognition. Staff Ambassador suggestions to date include Star of the month Monetary Incentives Thank you Cards Compliments Board Publicised recognition	May 2023	Delivery Reprofiled	To be discussed and agreed taking employees group views on board once the values and behaviours confirmed. Staff ambassadors group to be included in this discussion. Consideration to be given to extrinsic and intrinsic rewards to tap into motivation to demonstrate good or great behaviours.

### Theme 3 – Become an Agile Organisation

#### Key Achievements over last period

- 38 Agile charters completed for all teams by Jan 2022
- Common themes determined in workshop on 17 Feb 2022 with Watford Reimagining Team, some pathfinders and Unison.
- The Reimagining Watford team supported the opening of the new office space (which was launched on 20 July) with agile guidance so that the benefits of the new space are maximised.
- Corporate guidance on use of 8x8, Outlook and meeting etiquette approved by Project Board and provided to all employees. Agile charters were encouraged to be constantly reviewed as an evolving document. Pathfinders will champion agile ways of working and with managers, role model these new ways of working reflecting the Values and Behaviour work stream
- Reviews being carried out by managers, with support from pathfinders, on an ongoing basis, to include new teams/employees.

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#### Theme BRAG Analysis

BRAG rating	Key	Total number in theme
Completed	Completed	8
On track	On track	4
At risk	At risk	0
Issues	Issues	0
	Delivery reviewed as a result of external influences	5
<b>Total</b>		<b>17</b>

<b>COMMITMENT</b> Optimise choice over when and where our people work		<b>Key Milestones</b>	<b>'RAG' Rating</b>	<b>Update</b>
Team based review of processes, learning and ways of working pre-, during and post-crisis.	Each team agrees how they will work going forward, with a formal date for reflection and review.		Completed	The Covid-19 pandemic resulted in the majority of staff working remotely rather than being office based. However, the new collaborative space for staff has now been opened, informed by staff feedback and a more agile way of working, allowing us to maximise the use of available space and provide the very best service to residents, businesses and our community.
Deliberate decisions and actions are taken to retain and embed ways of working that support agility	Each team participates in a simple team reflection session. A focus on what to stop, drop, continue, and re-invigorate, post COVID-19		Completed	Flexible working is in place with staff working at home to suit their own personal situations and as part of our recruitment and retention approach. Managers are checking in with staff and ensuring key activities continue. Agile working space has now been launched.
Teams and the wider organisation agree what agile working is, and could be, so there is clarity (for example, in future, will 100% homeworking be acceptable for some roles?)	Clarity as to what agile working is, and recognition that "one size does not fit all" in each service – tested through the staff survey. "Challenge sessions" in LB where leaders can challenge each other, with a view to optimising an agile mind-set (at least every quarter).		Completed	Agile Charters developed for all service areas, setting out each department can deliver the best service to residents and businesses
Creation of agile champions. Teams, leaders and staff who can share their experiences (this becomes a recognised badge of honour).	Publication of case studies (at least every quarter). Reward and recognition of best practice.		Completed	Agile Champions have been appointed and supported the roll out of Agile Charters and the opening of the collaborative working space for staff



<b>COMMITMENT</b> Optimise choice over when and where our people work		<b>Key Milestones</b>	<b>'RAG' Rating</b>	<b>Update</b>
Development of organisational case studies in agility to demonstrate the art of the possible in different types of teams.	Agile can be developed in different ways across different teams, the measurement is in team members feeling that they have some control and autonomy of when, where and how they work, in the context of their department, as measured the staff survey		Completed	Agile Charters and collaborative working space now in place, informed by case studies at different organisations.

<b>COMMITMENT</b> Design ways of working that challenge and further develop an agile mind-set		<b>Key Milestones</b>	<b>'RAG' Rating</b>	<b>Update</b>
People policies (particularly health and safety and flexible working) are reviewed to optimise agile working	Policies reviewed, signed off and publicised. Flexibility and responsiveness that was demonstrated during crisis is replicated and embedded post-crisis and reflected in our policies.		Completed	Interim Smarter Working (Agile) policy introduced. Other policies have already been reviewed updated and published. Remaining policies that need to be reviewed have been identified and an action plan for review in place.
Align our annual review (appraisal) process with our succession planning and staff development approach	Incorporate our staff's interests in deepening their understanding of other parts of the council and from this: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop a register of interests of individuals who wish to gain exposure or experience in another area</li> <li>• Be considered for a secondment or temporary promotion opportunity</li> </ul>	October 2022	On track	Line managers to discuss and record as part of their regular catch up sessions. New performance management system is now live and annual appraisal process is complete. The reporting captured the data to form a more detailed picture of individual thoughts on development so planning can take place to ascertain ways to upskill individuals through secondment, coaching and mentoring.

<b>COMMITMENT</b> Design ways of working that challenge and further develop an agile mind-set		<b>Key Milestones</b>	<b>'RAG' Rating</b>	<b>Update</b>
Re-design and delivery of project teams, where staff are chosen because of their functional role or experience. Instead, there will be a deliberate move to encourage people to work on projects because of their interest and potential.	Establish a direct link to a new Leadership Development programme. This will result in a record take-up of project roles in different areas of the business.		Delivery re-profiled	i-perform launched 1 October 2020 as new check-in (1:1 meetings) and annual review platform. This incorporates development discussions and a section for recording skills to kick start the central database of staff skills and abilities. iTrent has superseded iPerform and is currently live. Check-ins to be developed from here following the closure of the PDR cycle on iTrent, MHR, who administer iTrent will be updating the performance module – review of system requirements will determine how iTrent can assist in storing development data
Creation of opportunities to pilot new approaches to agile working service models and solutions, with clear evaluation criteria	There will be a swift response to new demand. We will initially test on small scale, engaging users, gathering insight and learning what will work on a larger scale e.g. possible focus on digital solutions		Completed	Bi-monthly Team reflection exercises to identify and test opportunities to change processes that increase productivity. The delivery dates for this work have been reviewed to align with the Reimagining Watford project and will be included in the next phase of the Agile Team Charters work.

<b>COMMITMENT</b> Supporting the development of digital		<b>Key Milestones</b>	<b>'RAG' Rating</b>	<b>Update</b>
Support colleagues to improve their digital skills using a blend of face to face and online channels	Assessment of our workforce digital learning requirements as we roll out digital solutions for our communities.	December 2022	On track	Develop a programme of courses that will increase awareness and use of digital technologies. Digital training has been and is available for all staff. Further developments in the training to be reviewed following completion of annual

COMMITMENT		Key Milestones	'RAG' Rating	Update
Supporting the development of digital				
				appraisals via iTrent, with digital training needs highlighted as part of the review. Data can now be collated and training needs identified from PDR data.
Creation of a digital mentor programme which buddies up “technophobes with techno geeks” promoting digital and potentially intergenerational learning	Number of successful buddying relationships established.	October 2022	On track	Through iTrent process identify experts in their field and encourage them to become mentors for those developing in their roles. This work will build on success of the buddying relationships already in place.
Creation of “digital champions” clustered around our most popular digital hard and software (such as 8x8). Champions will be available to share their knowledge and learning, informally with colleagues across the Council.	Digital champions established and regularly publicised and supported to help and coach others.		Completed	Identify champions in their specialist areas and publicise their availability to help those in need of increasing their knowledge and confidence. Each area has an IT Champion.

COMMITMENT		Key Milestones	'RAG' Rating	Update
Break down silos across teams				
Creation of an annual service roadshow – an opportunity for our staff to show case to each other the work they are doing, and learn more about different parts of the Council	Roadshow takes place, is vibrant, well attended and evaluates well		Delivery re-profiled	This was due to be reviewed when we returned to a more consistent face to face working environment. Now that is achieved, the time is to revisit this and explore whether to take forward
Review and re-design of corporate and local induction to reduce silo	Time spent in the CSC, as the face of the Council will be mandatory for all new starters.		On track	Corporate induction has started to be reviewed and potentially delivered online (e-learning) and local induction will be reviewed to incorporate new

COMMITMENT		Key Milestones	'RAG' Rating	Update
Break down silos across teams				
working and set expectations from the outset, to include:	Each new starter will spend a minimum of two days working directly with at least two teams that their new role will require them to interface with, in the first 12 weeks of their employment.			values and behaviours. Agreement in principle from CSC to host new starters. The Autumn induction was delivered face to face with a view to incorporating the new values and behaviours into the Spring induction
A commitment that all staff, irrespective of their role or level in the organisation, can spend up to five days per year, working in, or shadowing in another department, to improve their understanding and make important links.	Take up of developmental opportunity to work in another department or team. An opportunity to blog and share their learning and experience, to encourage take up.		Delivery re-profiled	Pro-forma to be designed and distributed to all service managers to identify work shadowing opportunities in their direct area. Details of all opportunities to be shared on intranet so that managers can arrange. Covid restrictions had stopped office working and now is the time to revisit this commitment.
Creation of "partnership timeouts" where different parts of the council who are internal customers to each other, can come together, review ways of working and reflect on how the customer transfers seamlessly between teams.	Creation of tool which can be used by teams who often interface to identify process improvements. Participants will gain a greater understanding of the work of different teams and departments and have greater insight and awareness of the impact of their work on other teams.		Delivery re-profiled	Tool to be developed at start of new year to reflect the working arrangements in force at the time. This will be linked to the Values and Behaviours to ensure everyone has a mind-set to look at continuous evolution of the customer journey.
In recognition that silos take place in hierarchy, as well as across teams, take steps to empower front line teams and individuals to take action and make changes to practices, for the benefit of their customers.	Creation and delivery of OD tools to support leaders to encourage the whole team, irrespective of role or grade to lead innovation and service change (measured by the staff survey?). Staff should contribute ideas and suggestions		Delivery re-profiled	Tool to be developed at start of new year to reflect the working arrangements in force at the time. This is linked to work on Agile Charters and will be embedded in team meetings and management programmes.

<b>COMMITMENT</b> Break down silos across teams		<b>Key Milestones</b>	<b>'RAG' Rating</b>	<b>Update</b>
	for change and take decisions for the benefit of their customers.			

## Theme 4 – Performance and Staff Development

### Key Achievements over last period

- One Management Development course has been completed and positive feedback has been received
- Senior Leaders took part in an away day and all have undertaken the TMS assessment to increase their self-awareness
- iTrent (Performance and Learning & Development) has been launched and has been used by all to undertake their PDRs
- Data can now be extracted from iTrent to inform development and succession planning conversations

### Theme BRAG Analysis

BRAG rating	Key	Total number in theme
Completed	Completed	4
On track	On track	8
At risk	At risk	1
Issues	Issues	0
	Delivery re-profiled as a result of external influences	1
<b>Total</b>		<b>14</b>

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COMMITMENT		Key Milestones	'RAG' Rating	Update
We will create a strong development process				
Design and implementation of development programmes linked to succession planning and building organisational resilience	Proactive management of individuals to ensure stretch, personal development and improve likelihood of retention Identification of business critical roles, vacancy risk and pipeline prospects for short, medium and long-term Staff Ambassador group and management forums to discuss, benchmark and review current data	October 2022	Completed	Senior leadership team away day held in October and some leaders have taken up support through with one to one coaching. Management course launched in September with first cohort due to complete in November. Now values and behaviours confirmed, further programmes can be sourced and aligned to these, taking into account the approach to managing and

<b>COMMITMENT</b> We will create a strong development process		<b>Key Milestones</b>	<b>'RAG' Rating</b>	<b>Update</b>
				leading within Watford. Future development programmes will take the new values and behaviours into account too.
Revise and refresh our development offering for all staff to facilitate good quality performance management, set clear objectives linked with our Council Plan and reflect how our organisational values are being demonstrated. Need to focus on the WHAT and HOW part of the role	Roll out of refreshed development approach  100% of staff and managers have completed their annual reviews with clear objectives set and a personal development plan in place	By 1 April 2021 changed to 31 <sup>st</sup> March 2022 and went live June 2022	On track	New i-Perform system launched in October 2020 and supported the identification of development areas for staff and support the introduction of clear objectives, regularly reviewed within the i-perform platform. The HOW part will also link with the development of new values and behaviours – how we expect staff to behave. iTrent was used for PDR's this year (2022) with links to Council themes. The PDR window is now closed. Development of SMART objectives needs to be encouraged across the Council in line with the new values and behaviours approach.
Support the recruitment and retention of apprentices to the council.	Increase the number of council apprentices.	By March 2023	On track	Two corporate apprentices have been recruited, and one has already started, the other starts on 9 <sup>th</sup> January 2023.
Make full use of the apprenticeship levy to support learning and development and career progression.	All funds used. Demonstrable impact of learning for the individual and the organisation.	Ongoing	On track	The Corporate apprenticeship scheme will make use of the levy and further opportunities have been taken to upskill existing staff in the EPMO team. Any courses requested are checked to see if funding through the apprenticeship levy would be a more financially viable option.

<b>COMMITMENT</b> We will create a strong development process		<b>Key Milestones</b>	<b>'RAG' Rating</b>	<b>Update</b>
Develop a comprehensive approach to succession planning which incorporates planning for roles which are: Hard to Fill Business Critical (i.e. a potential single point of failure) Have an ageing workforce profile	Identification of all "single points of failure" roles will be a starting point to prioritise development needs. HR to create a central list so that risks can be identified.	By 1 April 2021 changed to <b>1 October 2021</b>	Completed	Pro-forma developed that will enable HR Business Partners to collect information from relevant line managers. A review has been undertaken and is now included with Service Plans (Single Point of Failure exercise).
HRBP's to hold information of who can step into each role at short notice.	Ensure there are no "Single Points of Failure" within the workforce.	1 October 2021	Completed	This is linked to the exercise on Single Point of Failure and is included in the above point.
We will work with partners to explore opportunities to create a comprehensive graduate and / or degree placement programmes, designed to attract and retain high calibre graduates	Successful programme in place with strong feedback from graduates.	Ongoing into 2023	On track	Potential graduate opportunities to be explored in 2023, alongside potential placement opportunities with the new T-levels being introduced.

<b>COMMITMENT</b> Prioritise the development of all of our people		<b>Key Milestones</b>	<b>'RAG' Rating</b>	<b>Update</b>
Build in the concept of "everyone is a leader at Watford" into our recruitment and on-boarding programmes, as well as our work with colleagues at all levels of the organisation	At the last staff survey, 32% of respondents felt that they cannot contribute to ideas for improvement / ways to do things differently (and another 3% didn't know). Success to be measured by a statistically significant improvement in staff survey results.	January 2023	On track	The new values and behaviours clearly set this out in terms of 'everyone is a leader', and this will be incorporated into the whole employee cycle including attraction, retention and development.. Senior leadership and management programmes will be aligned to the values



COMMITMENT		Key Milestones	'RAG' Rating	Update
Prioritise the development of all of our people				
	Support in first line leadership, middle leadership and senior leadership programmes, emphasising the benefits and risks of leadership styles that lead to constant improvement.			and behaviours and set out clear expectations around management styles as well as adaptability.
Review training and promotion data by workforce profile, so that we can assure ourselves that under-represented groups are both accessing the development required and successfully achieving promotions, in our organisation.	Assurance that under-represented groups access the same level of development and achieve promotion at the same rate as all staff.	December 2022	Some risk	Collecting workforce data is now being addressed directly with strategies to increase the data submitted, representing an improvement on the last reporting period. This includes focus from HR as well as someone seconded to work on this as part of their role in the Corporate team to review the entire approach to EDI. Once this data is available over the next period, then this can be used in line with the training data to review training opportunities to ensure under-represented groups are accessing and taking up the development offered, removing any residual risk to this activity.
Launch and integrate our new performance review system, i-Perform for regular 1:1 check –ins and annual reviews (appraisal) so that all staff feel it's a worthwhile exercise: - Incorporation of interests and passion, as well as career development discussions.	Currently, 18% of our staff feel that the annual review is not of value to them (and a further 8% did not know!). We want our people to look forward and see the value of an annual review. The success will be an improved rating of the quality of the conversation (measured by the staff survey).	By 1 October 2021 <b>Delivery changed to 31<sup>st</sup> June 2022 to reflect delays to other linked projects.</b>	Completed	iTrent performance (PDR) module launched June 2022. First PDR cycle on iTrent still live and number of completed PDR's continue to increase. Objectives can be linked to Council plan with future opportunities to link to values and behaviours.

<b>COMMITMENT</b> Prioritise the development of all of our people		<b>Key Milestones</b>	<b>'RAG' Rating</b>	<b>Update</b>
- Use the annual review as an opportunity to nurture all talent, irrespective of grade or role				
- Carefully link the role back to the objectives of the organisation so that everyone understands how they make a difference				

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<b>COMMITMENT</b> We will encourage and actively develop our aspiring leaders		<b>Key Milestones</b>	<b>'RAG' Rating</b>	<b>Update</b>
Our new 'Watford Leads' development programme will build management skills and confidence amongst all team managers and leaders (3rd tier managers).	All 3rd tier managers will complete the course over time. Participants will deliver a specific business improvement project in the workplace. All events to have a cross section of departments represented. Positive feedback from participants. Colleagues feel supported by their manager – measured by the staff survey (baseline to be set following next survey)	June 2023	On track	The 'Watford Leads' programme has evolved over the last year. Following on from the leadership workshops undertaken in Q2 further management and leadership training can be designed incorporating the newly launched values and behaviours.
Introduce a 'first steps to leadership' programme to cover the main principles of leadership and Watford's Council policies and processes.	Course designed. Selection and evaluation approach agreed. Aspiring leaders feel supported to develop their career – measured by course evaluation (baseline to be set).	December 2022	On track	Linked to evolvment of leadership and management programmes above. As part of the values and behaviours implementation plan currently being worked on, we can scope a leaders course with tailored

COMMITMENT		Key Milestones	'RAG' Rating	Update
We will encourage and actively develop our aspiring leaders				
	Positive feedback from participants. Improved compliance with corporate policies.			modules to incorporate agile working and the new values and behaviours

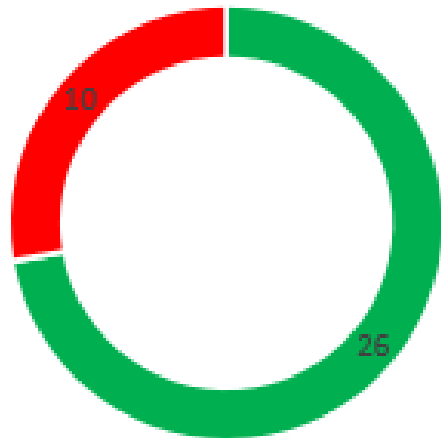
COMMITMENT		Key Milestones	'RAG' Rating	Update
We will create an enviable programme of leadership development				
Pilot and roll -out a new leadership competency framework, that is linked to the annual review process	Managers use feedback to create their personal development plan – measured through performance review scores. Managers visibly demonstrate the qualities set out in the Framework, measured via regular 1; 1 check-in meetings and annual review process. Increased opportunities for secondments and career progression for aspiring leaders – measured by staff survey (baseline to be set)	By 1 April 2021 change to <b>April 2023</b>	Delivery re-profiled	Values and behaviours now confirmed and the behavioural framework can now be used in consideration of the annual review and performance management process going into 2023 and beyond
Support leaders to link workforce and succession planning – forecasting the type and number of roles and skills needed for the future and create learning and development plans to support their team development.	All leaders received appropriate training tools and support to complete their workforce plans. All services have a workforce plan in place, aligned to the annual business planning cycle.	January 2023	On track	Review workforce plan with leaders to ensure appropriate individual development plans are in place to satisfy future needs. Line managers have reviewed as part of single point of failure exercise. HRBPs to have regular reviews. Links in with development of Leadership programme and development of tools to undertake reviews of their workforce requirements. Review of single point of failure exercise following restructure to ensure robust plan still in place. October update – the senior leadership restructure

COMMITMENT		Key Milestones	'RAG' Rating	Update
We will create an enviable programme of leadership development				
				along with the Council plan inform our thinking of the future direction of the Council and what service areas are fully resourced, and where the skills gaps are. We continue to support leaders where required to fill these skills gaps through developing existing officers as well as recruitment of new ones.

## Appendix C: Quarter 3 Key Performance Indicators 2022/23






### Overview

### KPI Target Analysis

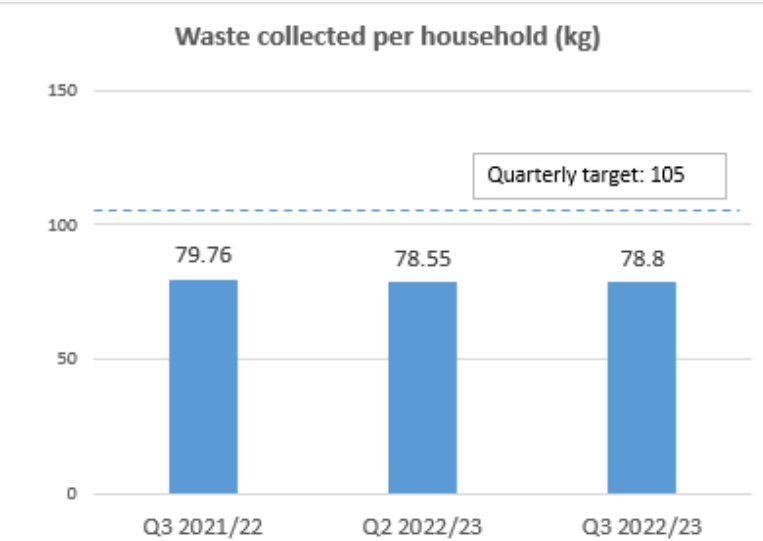


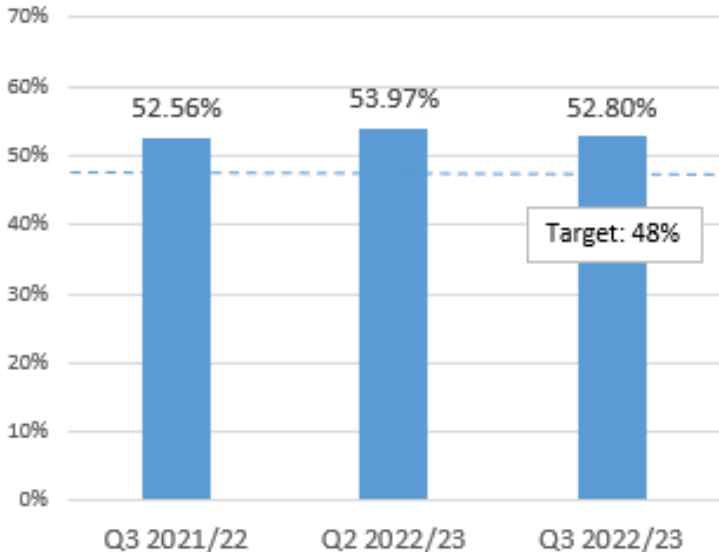

■ Within target ■ Outside of target

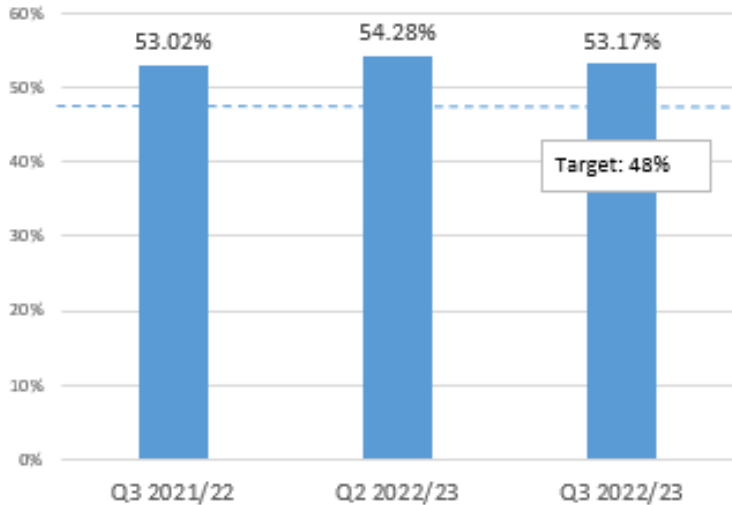
Graphic showing key performance indicators with targets that are reported in Q3.

Key	
	Above Target (Good result)
	Below Target (Good result)
	On Target
	Above Target (negative result)
	Below Target (negative result)

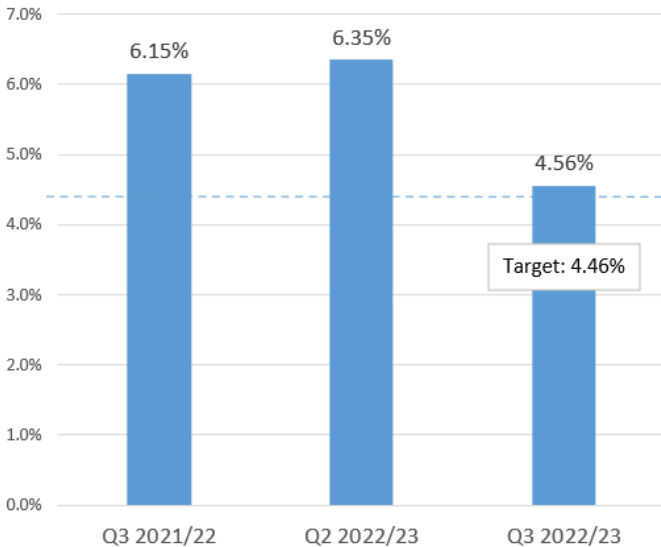


**Council Plan Theme: A greener, brighter future**

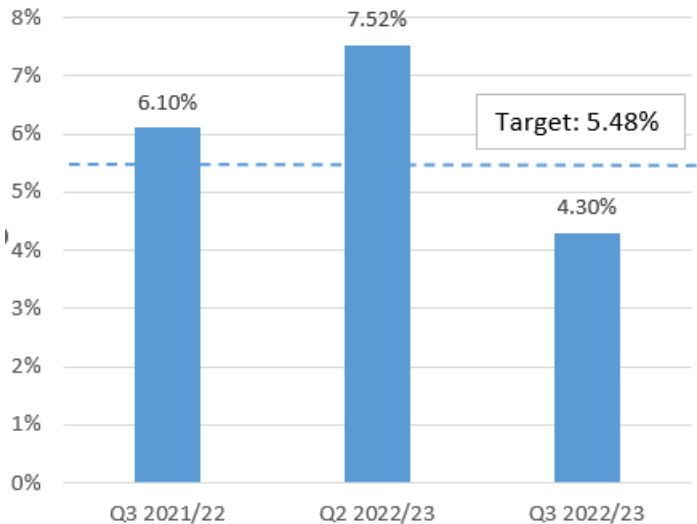

	Indicator	Service area	Reporting frequency	Results 2022/23	Comments & Benchmarking (where available)										
1.	Residual household waste per household	Leisure, Community & Environ'tal Services  Associate Director of Environment	Quarterly	<p><b>RESULT: 78.80 kg</b></p>  <p>Waste collected per household (kg)</p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Quarter</th> <th>Waste collected (kg)</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Q3 2021/22</td> <td>79.76</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Q2 2022/23</td> <td>78.55</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Q3 2022/23</td> <td>78.8</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Quarterly target</td> <td>105</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Quarter	Waste collected (kg)	Q3 2021/22	79.76	Q2 2022/23	78.55	Q3 2022/23	78.8	Quarterly target	105	<p>↓</p> <p>A low result is good for this indicator</p> <p><b>TARGET per quarter: 105 kg</b></p>
Quarter	Waste collected (kg)														
Q3 2021/22	79.76														
Q2 2022/23	78.55														
Q3 2022/23	78.8														
Quarterly target	105														
2.	Waste recycled and composted	Leisure, Community & Environ'tal Services	Quarterly	<p><b>RESULT: 52.80%</b></p>	<p>↑</p> <p>A high result is good for this indicator</p> <p><b>TARGET: 48%</b></p>										

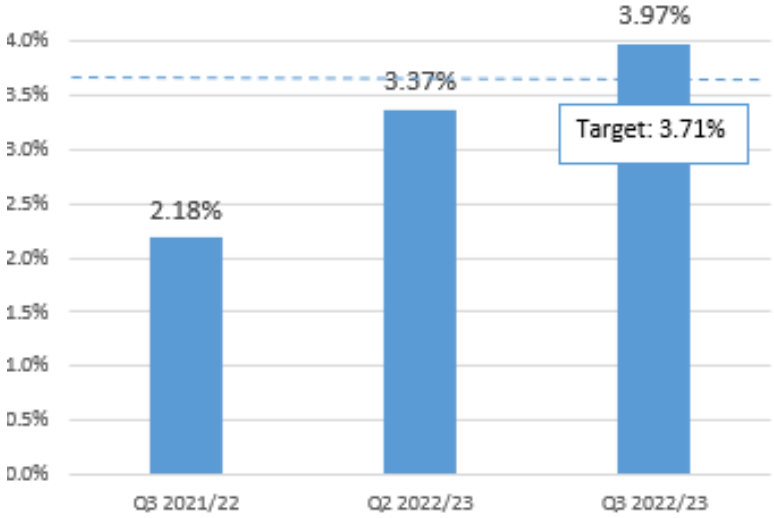

	Indicator	Service area	Reporting frequency	Results 2022/23	Comments & Benchmarking (where available)										
		Associate Director of Environment		<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Waste recycled and composted</b></p>  <table border="1" style="margin-left: auto; margin-right: auto;"> <thead> <tr> <th>Period</th> <th>Percentage</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Q3 2021/22</td> <td>52.56%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Q2 2022/23</td> <td>53.97%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Q3 2022/23</td> <td>52.80%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Target</td> <td>48%</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Period	Percentage	Q3 2021/22	52.56%	Q2 2022/23	53.97%	Q3 2022/23	52.80%	Target	48%	The dry hot summer contributed to the lower green waste tonnages, although the result has still exceeded the target.
Period	Percentage														
Q3 2021/22	52.56%														
Q2 2022/23	53.97%														
Q3 2022/23	52.80%														
Target	48%														
3.	Recycled household kerbside collection services (Veolia contract target)	Leisure, Community & Environ'tal Services  Associate Director of Environment	Quarterly	<b>RESULT: 53.17</b>	<p style="text-align: center;"></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>A high result is good for this indicator</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>TARGET: 48%</b></p> <p>See commentary for indicator 2.</p>										

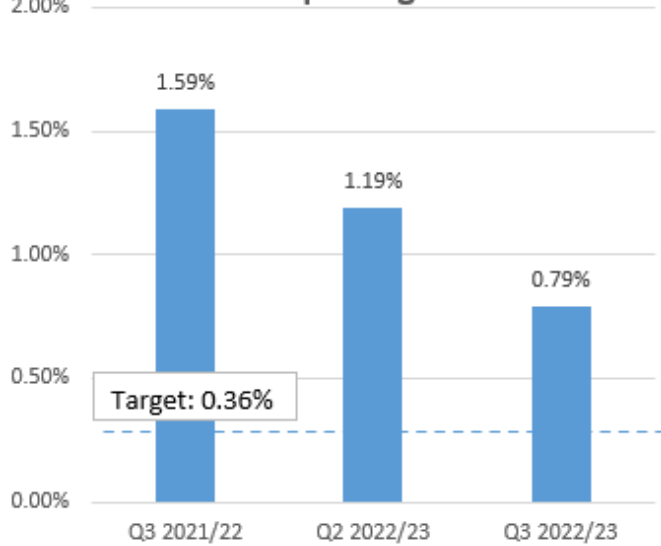

	Indicator	Service area	Reporting frequency	Results 2022/23	Comments & Benchmarking (where available)										
				<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Waste recycled and composted (contractual target)</b></p>  <table border="1" style="margin-left: auto; margin-right: auto;"> <thead> <tr> <th>Quarter</th> <th>Percentage</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Q3 2021/22</td> <td>53.02%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Q2 2022/23</td> <td>54.28%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Q3 2022/23</td> <td>53.17%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Target</td> <td>48%</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Quarter	Percentage	Q3 2021/22	53.02%	Q2 2022/23	54.28%	Q3 2022/23	53.17%	Target	48%	
Quarter	Percentage														
Q3 2021/22	53.02%														
Q2 2022/23	54.28%														
Q3 2022/23	53.17%														
Target	48%														



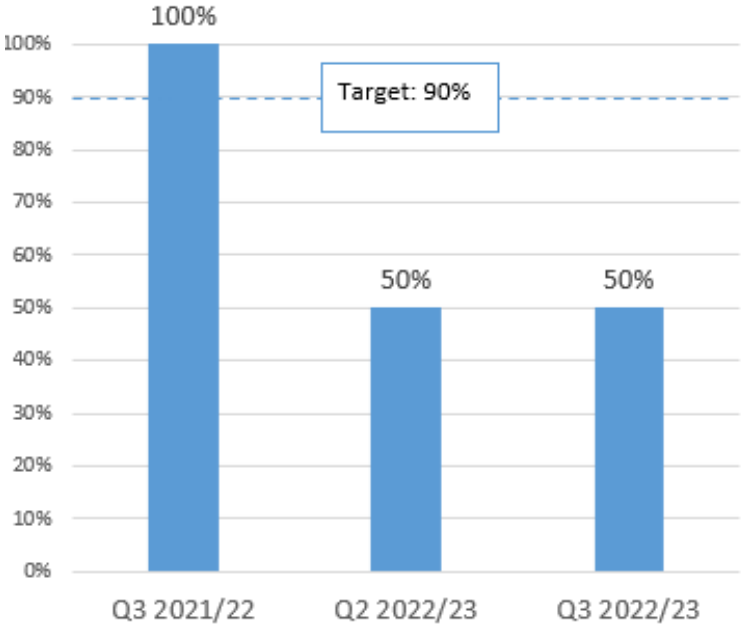

	Indicator	Service area	Reporting frequency	Results 2022/23	Comments & Benchmarking (where available)										
4.	Levels of Litter: Improved street and environmental cleanliness	Leisure, Community & Environ'tal Services  Associate Director of Environment	Quarterly	<p><b>RESULT: 4.56%</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Street cleanliness: levels of litter</b></p>  <table border="1"> <caption>Street cleanliness: levels of litter</caption> <thead> <tr> <th>Period</th> <th>Level (%)</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Q3 2021/22</td> <td>6.15%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Q2 2022/23</td> <td>6.35%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Q3 2022/23</td> <td>4.56%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Target</td> <td>4.46%</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Period	Level (%)	Q3 2021/22	6.15%	Q2 2022/23	6.35%	Q3 2022/23	4.56%	Target	4.46%	<p style="text-align: center;"></p> <p><b>A low result is good for this indicator</b></p> <p><b>TARGET: 4.46%</b></p> <p>The litter score has decreased from 6.15% this time last year to 4.56% this year. The results show significant performance gains within Industry and Warehousing, Main Road and High Obstruction Housing areas. To reduce the score further attention will be focused on littering hotspots within Other Highways, Main Road and Other Retail and Commercial areas.</p>
Period	Level (%)														
Q3 2021/22	6.15%														
Q2 2022/23	6.35%														
Q3 2022/23	4.56%														
Target	4.46%														
5.	Levels of Detritus: Improved street and environmental cleanliness	Leisure, Community & Environ'tal Services  Associate Director of Environment	Quarterly	<p><b>RESULT: 4.30%</b></p>	<p style="text-align: center;"></p> <p><b>A low result is good for this indicator</b></p> <p><b>TARGET: 5.48%</b></p> <p>The detritus score has significantly reduced from 6.10% this time last year to 4.30% this year, which represents the lowest score in</p>										

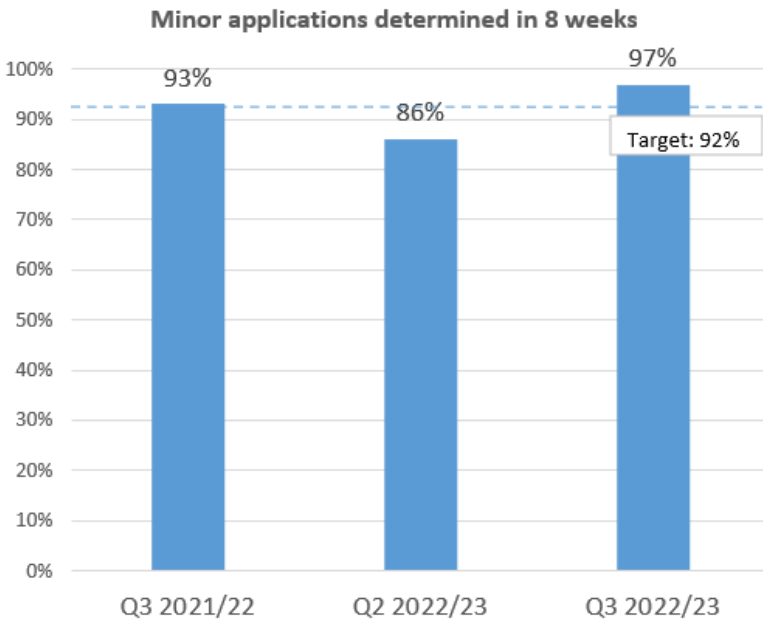
	Indicator	Service area	Reporting frequency	Results 2022/23	Comments & Benchmarking (where available)										
				<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Street cleanliness: levels of detritus</b></p>  <table border="1" style="margin-left: auto; margin-right: auto;"> <caption>Street cleanliness: levels of detritus</caption> <thead> <tr> <th>Quarter</th> <th>Level of detritus (%)</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Q3 2021/22</td> <td>6.10%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Q2 2022/23</td> <td>7.52%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Q3 2022/23</td> <td>4.30%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Target</td> <td>5.48%</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Quarter	Level of detritus (%)	Q3 2021/22	6.10%	Q2 2022/23	7.52%	Q3 2022/23	4.30%	Target	5.48%	<p>the past seven years. This score has been achieved despite the challenging circumstances, caused by the long autumn season, and the early cold spell of weather. Although there were larger leaf accumulations found during the survey than normal for the time of year (due to the late leaf drop), the leaves in many cases had not broken down into detritus. There was a good level of performance across all areas, however in order to achieve further performance gains, attention will be directed towards Other Highways, Main Roads and Recreational areas in time for the next survey.</p>
Quarter	Level of detritus (%)														
Q3 2021/22	6.10%														
Q2 2022/23	7.52%														
Q3 2022/23	4.30%														
Target	5.48%														
6.	Levels of Graffiti: Improved street and environmental cleanliness	Leisure, Community & Environ'tal Services  Associate Director of Environment	Quarterly	<p><b>RESULT: 3.97%</b></p>	<p style="text-align: center;"></p> <p><b>A low result is good for this indicator</b></p> <p><b>TARGET: 3.71%</b></p> <p>The graffiti score has increased from 2.18% this time last year to 3.97% this year, which is slightly above target. Graffiti levels remain low in most areas, however the result reflects a spate of graffiti occurring in Other Highway, Main Road, Main Retail and Commercial and Other Retail and Commercial areas. These locations will be</p>										

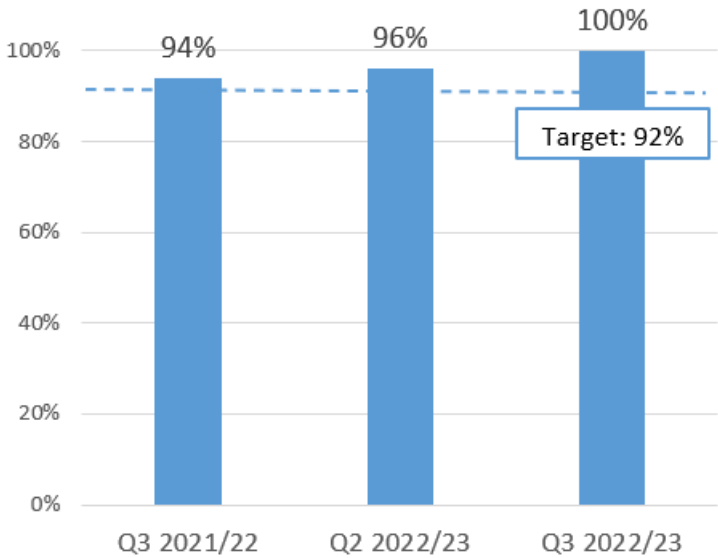
	Indicator	Service area	Reporting frequency	Results 2022/23	Comments & Benchmarking (where available)										
				<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Street cleanliness: levels of graffiti</b></p>  <table border="1" style="margin-left: auto; margin-right: auto;"> <caption>Data for Street cleanliness: levels of graffiti</caption> <thead> <tr> <th>Quarter</th> <th>Level of graffiti (%)</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Q3 2021/22</td> <td>2.18%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Q2 2022/23</td> <td>3.37%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Q3 2022/23</td> <td>3.97%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Target</td> <td>3.71%</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Quarter	Level of graffiti (%)	Q3 2021/22	2.18%	Q2 2022/23	3.37%	Q3 2022/23	3.97%	Target	3.71%	<p>targeted to bring the score back down ahead of the next survey.</p>
Quarter	Level of graffiti (%)														
Q3 2021/22	2.18%														
Q2 2022/23	3.37%														
Q3 2022/23	3.97%														
Target	3.71%														
7.	Levels of Fly Posting: Improved street and environmental cleanliness	Leisure, Community & Environ'tal Services  Associate Director of Environment	Quarterly	<p><b>RESULT: 0.79%</b></p>	<p style="text-align: center;"></p> <p><b>A low result is good for this indicator</b></p> <p><b>TARGET: 0.36%</b></p> <p>The fly posting score has decreased from 1.59% this time last year to 0.79% this year. The results show a reduction in fly posting levels found in most areas, with only 4 adverse grades recorded, which were due</p>										

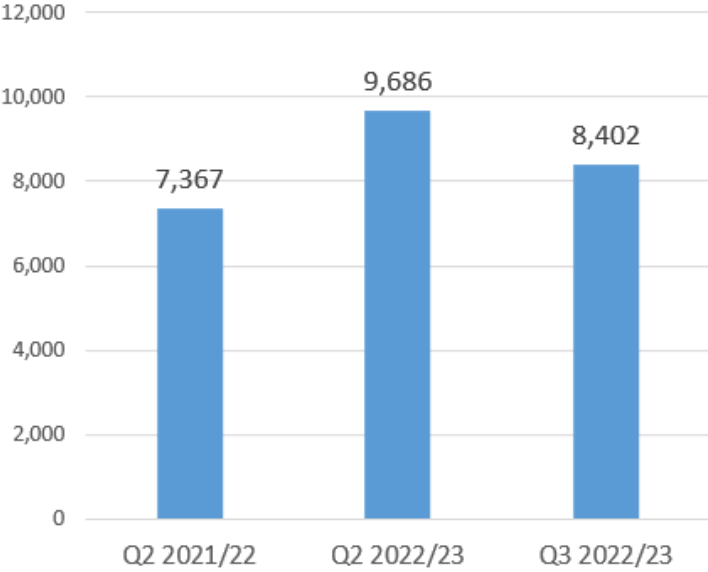
	Indicator	Service area	Reporting frequency	Results 2022/23	Comments & Benchmarking (where available)										
				<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Street cleanliness: levels of fly posting</b></p>  <table border="1" style="margin-left: auto; margin-right: auto;"> <caption>Street cleanliness: levels of fly posting</caption> <thead> <tr> <th>Period</th> <th>Level (%)</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Q3 2021/22</td> <td>1.59%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Q2 2022/23</td> <td>1.19%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Q3 2022/23</td> <td>0.79%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Target</td> <td>0.36%</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Period	Level (%)	Q3 2021/22	1.59%	Q2 2022/23	1.19%	Q3 2022/23	0.79%	Target	0.36%	<p>to two estate agent boards (Main Road areas), business fly posting (Industry and Warehousing area), and an out-of-date highway works notice (Other Retail and Commercial Area). Operatives will continue to monitor, spot and remove fly posters in all areas.</p>
Period	Level (%)														
Q3 2021/22	1.59%														
Q2 2022/23	1.19%														
Q3 2022/23	0.79%														
Target	0.36%														
8.	Number of Green Flag awards achieved	Parks Heritage and Culture  Associate Director of Environment	Annual	<b>RESULT: 17</b>	<p style="text-align: center;"></p> <p style="text-align: center;">A high result is good for this indicator</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>TARGET for 2022/23: 16</b></p>										

**Council Plan Theme: An inspiring, thriving and creative town**

	Indicator	Service area	Reporting frequency	Results 2022/23	Comments & Benchmarking (where available)								
9.	Processing of planning applications: 'major' applications - % determined within 13 weeks	Planning  Associate Director of Planning, Infrastructure and Economy	Quarterly	<p><b>RESULT: 50%</b></p> <p>Major applications determined in 13 weeks</p>  <table border="1"> <caption>Major applications determined in 13 weeks</caption> <thead> <tr> <th>Quarter</th> <th>Percentage</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Q3 2021/22</td> <td>100%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Q2 2022/23</td> <td>50%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Q3 2022/23</td> <td>50%</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p>Target: 90%</p>	Quarter	Percentage	Q3 2021/22	100%	Q2 2022/23	50%	Q3 2022/23	50%	<p></p> <p><b>A high result is good for this indicator</b></p> <p><b>TARGET: 90%</b></p> <p>There were 2 applications in this category during Q3 with 1 determined within 13 weeks or with an agreed extension of time and 1 outside the target.</p> <p>19/01412 VAR was not determined within the 13 week period due to a number of delays, including negotiating the S106 agreement.</p>
Quarter	Percentage												
Q3 2021/22	100%												
Q2 2022/23	50%												
Q3 2022/23	50%												

	Indicator	Service area	Reporting frequency	Results 2022/23	Comments & Benchmarking (where available)										
10.	Process of planning applications: 'minor' applications - % determined within 8 weeks	Planning  Associate Director of Planning, Infrastructure and Economy	Quarterly	<p><b>RESULT: 97%</b></p>  <table border="1"> <caption>Minor applications determined in 8 weeks</caption> <thead> <tr> <th>Quarter</th> <th>Percentage</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Q3 2021/22</td> <td>93%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Q2 2022/23</td> <td>86%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Q3 2022/23</td> <td>97%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Target</td> <td>92%</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Quarter	Percentage	Q3 2021/22	93%	Q2 2022/23	86%	Q3 2022/23	97%	Target	92%	<p>↑</p> <p><b>A high result is good for this indicator</b></p> <p><b>TARGET: 92%</b></p> <p>There were 38 applications in this category during Q3, with 37 determined within 8 weeks or with an agreed extension of time and 1 outside the target.</p>
Quarter	Percentage														
Q3 2021/22	93%														
Q2 2022/23	86%														
Q3 2022/23	97%														
Target	92%														
11.	Process of planning applications: 'other' applications - % determined within 8 weeks	Planning  Associate Director of Planning, Infrastructure and Economy	Quarterly	<p><b>RESULT: 100%</b></p>	<p>↑</p> <p><b>A high result is good for this indicator</b></p> <p><b>TARGET: 92%</b></p> <p>There were 110 applications in this category during Q3 with 110 determined within 8 weeks or with an agreed extension of time.</p>										


	Indicator	Service area	Reporting frequency	Results 2022/23	Comments & Benchmarking (where available)										
				<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Other applications determined in 8 weeks</b></p>  <table border="1" style="margin-left: auto; margin-right: auto;"> <thead> <tr> <th>Quarter</th> <th>Percentage</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Q3 2021/22</td> <td>94%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Q2 2022/23</td> <td>96%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Q3 2022/23</td> <td>100%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Target</td> <td>92%</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Quarter	Percentage	Q3 2021/22	94%	Q2 2022/23	96%	Q3 2022/23	100%	Target	92%	
Quarter	Percentage														
Q3 2021/22	94%														
Q2 2022/23	96%														
Q3 2022/23	100%														
Target	92%														
12.	Penalty Charge Notices issued	Parking Associate Director of Environment	Quarterly	<b>RESULT: 8,402</b>	<p><b>No target is set for penalty charge notices in line with national guidelines.</b></p> <p>The figure is inclusive of bus gate PCN's. October = 2,550 / Bus Gate – 437 November = 2,567 / Bus Gate - 359 December = 2,249 / Bus Gate - 240</p>										


	Indicator	Service area	Reporting frequency	Results 2022/23	Comments & Benchmarking (where available)								
				<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Penalty charge notices issued</b></p>  <table border="1"> <caption>Penalty charge notices issued</caption> <thead> <tr> <th>Quarter</th> <th>Number of notices</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Q2 2021/22</td> <td>7,367</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Q2 2022/23</td> <td>9,686</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Q3 2022/23</td> <td>8,402</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Quarter	Number of notices	Q2 2021/22	7,367	Q2 2022/23	9,686	Q3 2022/23	8,402	
Quarter	Number of notices												
Q2 2021/22	7,367												
Q2 2022/23	9,686												
Q3 2022/23	8,402												
13.	Tribunal appeals (won/lost/not contested)	Parking Associate Director of Environment	Quarterly	<p><b>RESULT</b></p> <p>There was 1 appeal logged during Q3, which was won by WBC.</p>	<b>No target set.</b>								
14.	Reasons for appeals lost (narrative measure)	Parking Associate Director of Environment	Quarterly	Not applicable for Q3, as no appeals were lost during this period.									

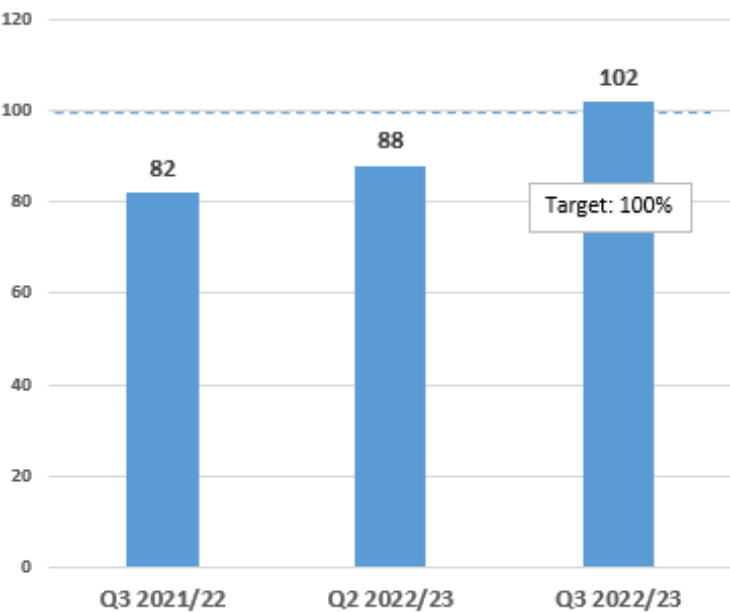


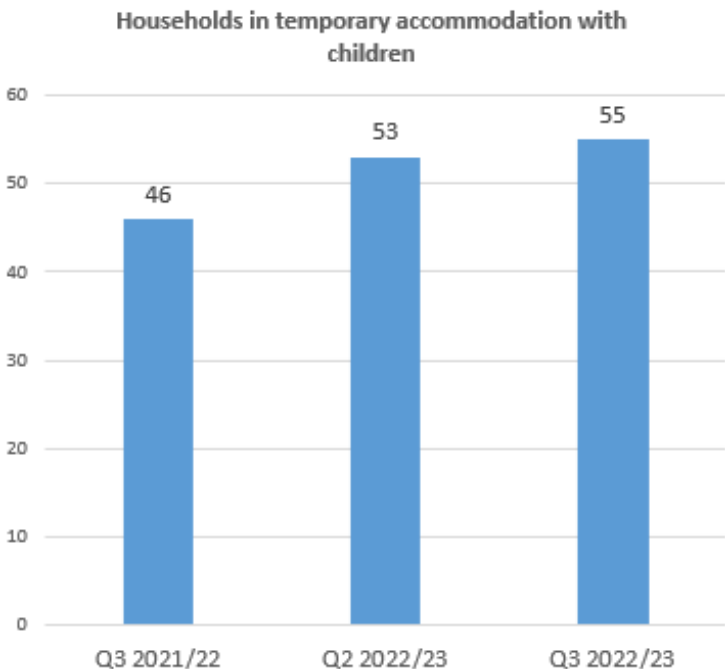


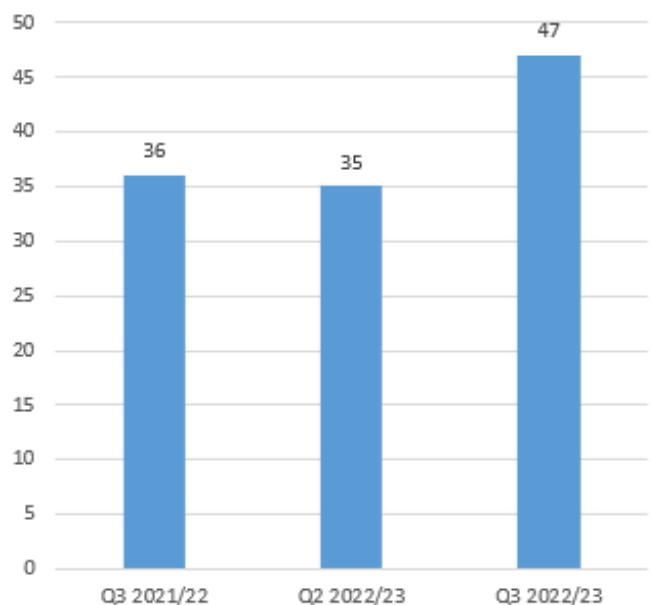

**Council Plan Theme: A diverse, happy and healthy town**

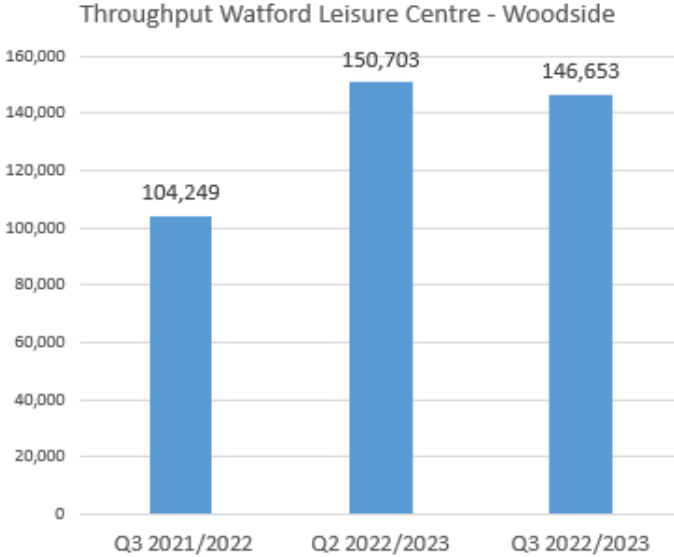
	Indicator	Service area	Reporting frequency	Results 2022/23	Comments & Benchmarking (where available)								
15.	Affordable homes completions, including social / affordable rent, affordable sales and starter homes.	Housing  Associate Director of Housing and Wellbeing	Biannually	This indicator is reported at the end of Quarter 2 and at the end of the year.	<i>(Starter homes do not contribute to reduction in homeless households on the waiting list or in temporary accom.)</i>								
16.	Number of statutory homeless	Housing  Associate Director of Housing and Wellbeing	Quarterly	<p><b>RESULT: 12</b></p>  <table border="1"> <caption>Number of statutory homeless</caption> <thead> <tr> <th>Quarter</th> <th>Number of statutory homeless</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Q3 2019/20</td> <td>8</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Q2 2020/21</td> <td>13</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Q3 2020/21</td> <td>12</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Quarter	Number of statutory homeless	Q3 2019/20	8	Q2 2020/21	13	Q3 2020/21	12	<p><b>No target set</b></p> <p>The number of cases where the council has accepted a statutory duty to house (aka main duty) remains at a low level.</p> <p>See indicator 17 regarding reasons for homelessness.</p>
Quarter	Number of statutory homeless												
Q3 2019/20	8												
Q2 2020/21	13												
Q3 2020/21	12												

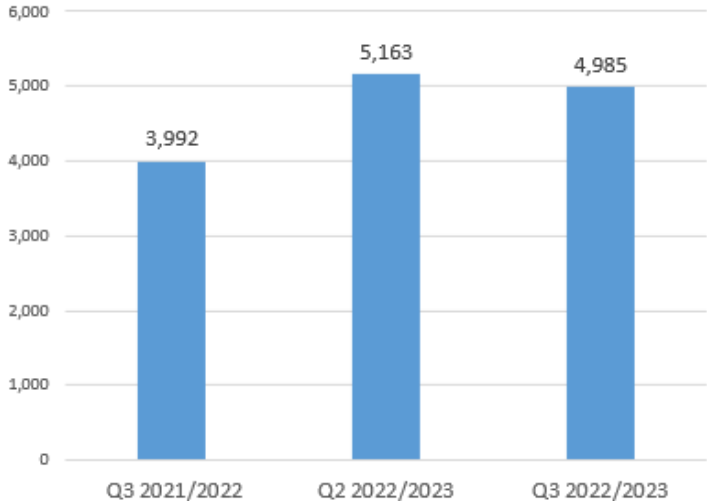
	Indicator	Service area	Reporting frequency	Results 2022/23	Comments & Benchmarking (where available)																																
17.	Reasons for homelessness  <b>Narrative indicator</b>	Housing  Associate Director of Housing and Wellbeing	Quarterly	The reasons for homelessness among those to whom the council accepted a duty to house are as follows: <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Reason for loss of last settled home</th> <th>Result Q3 2022/23</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Family no longer willing or able to accommodate</td> <td>3</td> </tr> <tr> <td>End of private rented tenancy - assured shorthold tenancy</td> <td>3</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Other</td> <td>0</td> </tr> <tr> <td>End of social rented tenancy</td> <td>0</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Eviction from support housing</td> <td>2</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Relationship with partner ended (non-violent breakdown)</td> <td>1</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Domestic abuse</td> <td>1</td> </tr> <tr> <td>End of private rented tenancy - not assured shorthold tenancy</td> <td>0</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Property disrepair</td> <td>1</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Friends no longer willing or able to accommodate</td> <td>0</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Fire, flood or other emergency</td> <td>0</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Left institution with no accommodation available</td> <td>1</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Home no longer suitable due to disability/ill health</td> <td>0</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Unaffordable accommodation</td> <td>0</td> </tr> <tr> <td><b>Total</b></td> <td><b>12</b></td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Reason for loss of last settled home	Result Q3 2022/23	Family no longer willing or able to accommodate	3	End of private rented tenancy - assured shorthold tenancy	3	Other	0	End of social rented tenancy	0	Eviction from support housing	2	Relationship with partner ended (non-violent breakdown)	1	Domestic abuse	1	End of private rented tenancy - not assured shorthold tenancy	0	Property disrepair	1	Friends no longer willing or able to accommodate	0	Fire, flood or other emergency	0	Left institution with no accommodation available	1	Home no longer suitable due to disability/ill health	0	Unaffordable accommodation	0	<b>Total</b>	<b>12</b>	
Reason for loss of last settled home	Result Q3 2022/23																																				
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Unaffordable accommodation	0																																				
<b>Total</b>	<b>12</b>																																				
18.	Number of households living in temporary accommodation <i>Snap-shot at quarter end</i>	Housing  Associate Director of Housing and Wellbeing	Quarterly	<b>RESULT: 102</b>	 A low result is good for this indicator  <b>TARGET: 100</b>																																

	Indicator	Service area	Reporting frequency	Results 2022/23	Comments & Benchmarking (where available)								
				<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Households in temporary accommodation</b></p>  <table border="1" style="margin-left: auto; margin-right: auto;"> <thead> <tr> <th>Quarter</th> <th>Households</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Q3 2021/22</td> <td>82</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Q2 2022/23</td> <td>88</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Q3 2022/23</td> <td>102</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Quarter	Households	Q3 2021/22	82	Q2 2022/23	88	Q3 2022/23	102	<p>There has been a surge in the number of households in temporary accommodation in the last three months with more than 100 households being accommodated at any one time since mid-November 2022. Until recently there were a large number of new homes handed over by housing associations which helped tremendously in being able to prevent homelessness and/or move households on quickly from temporary accommodation. A comparison has been done with the same quarter in 2021-22 on the main reasons for presenting as homeless and needing temporary accommodation. This comparison shows that domestic abuse and the end of an assured shorthold tenancy have both increased from 17% (Q3 2021-22) to 21% (Q3 2022-23) and 26% to 32% of all cases respectively. Both these increases are possibly linked to the cost of living crisis. Conversely, cases have gone down significantly where a household's family is no longer willing or able to accommodate them, from 26% of all cases in Q3 2021-22 to 10% in the current quarter. It is not yet clear why the latter change has taken place.</p>
Quarter	Households												
Q3 2021/22	82												
Q2 2022/23	88												
Q3 2022/23	102												

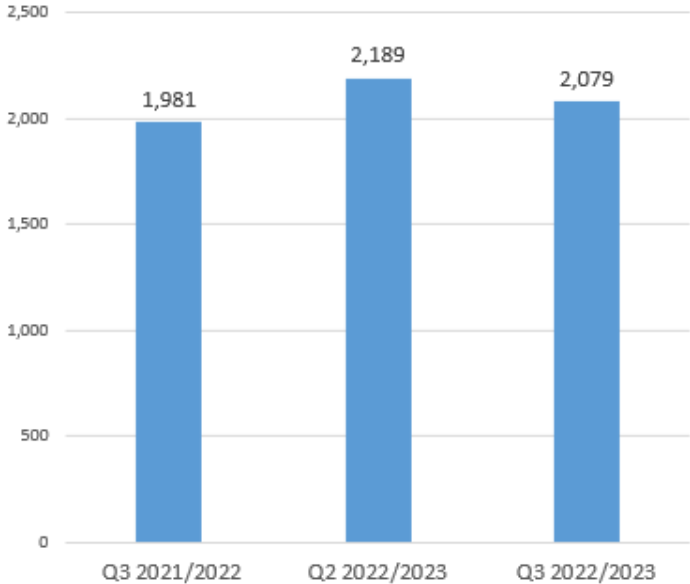
	Indicator	Service area	Reporting frequency	Results 2022/23	Comments & Benchmarking (where available)								
19.	Number of households living in temporary accommodation with children <i>Snap-shot at quarter end</i>	Housing  Associate Director of Housing and Wellbeing	Quarterly	<p><b>RESULT: 55</b></p>  <table border="1"> <caption>Households in temporary accommodation with children</caption> <thead> <tr> <th>Quarter</th> <th>Number of Households</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Q3 2021/22</td> <td>46</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Q2 2022/23</td> <td>53</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Q3 2022/23</td> <td>55</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Quarter	Number of Households	Q3 2021/22	46	Q2 2022/23	53	Q3 2022/23	55	<p><b>No target set</b></p> <p>There were 55 households with children placed in temporary accommodation at the end of December 2022, which included 136 children. This is only slightly above the figure for Q2, 2022-23 with the number of children within those households staying more or less the same.</p>
Quarter	Number of Households												
Q3 2021/22	46												
Q2 2022/23	53												
Q3 2022/23	55												
20.	Number of households living in temporary accommodation without children <i>Snap-shot at quarter end</i>	Housing  Associate Director of Housing and Wellbeing	Quarterly	<p><b>RESULT: 47</b></p>	<p><b>No target set</b></p> <p>The number of households without children has increased significantly since Q2 when it was 35. The 47 households comprised 33 men, 11 women and 3 couples without children accommodated. Not all single people or couples without children have access to temporary accommodation (TA). To access TA their</p>								

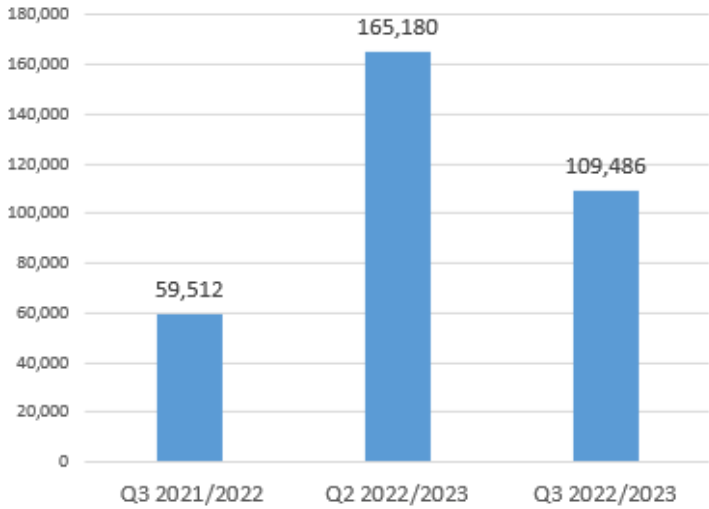
	Indicator	Service area	Reporting frequency	Results 2022/23	Comments & Benchmarking (where available)								
				<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Households in temporary accommodation without children</b></p>  <table border="1" style="margin-left: auto; margin-right: auto;"> <thead> <tr> <th>Quarter</th> <th>Number of Households</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Q3 2021/22</td> <td>36</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Q2 2022/23</td> <td>35</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Q3 2022/23</td> <td>47</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Quarter	Number of Households	Q3 2021/22	36	Q2 2022/23	35	Q3 2022/23	47	<p>support needs will usually mean they high levels of vulnerability.</p>
Quarter	Number of Households												
Q3 2021/22	36												
Q2 2022/23	35												
Q3 2022/23	47												
21.	<p>Rough sleepers within the authority area <i>Snap shot taken on one night in November</i></p>	<p>Housing  Associate Director of Housing and Wellbeing</p>	Annual	<p><b>NOVEMBER 2022 RESULT: 10</b></p>	<p style="text-align: center;"></p> <p><b>A low result is good for this indicator</b></p> <p><b>TARGET: 5</b></p> <p>This is up by 4 since the previous year. In addition, despite a winter night shelter with 10 beds (available from 1 December 2022 until 31 March 2023) there continues</p>								

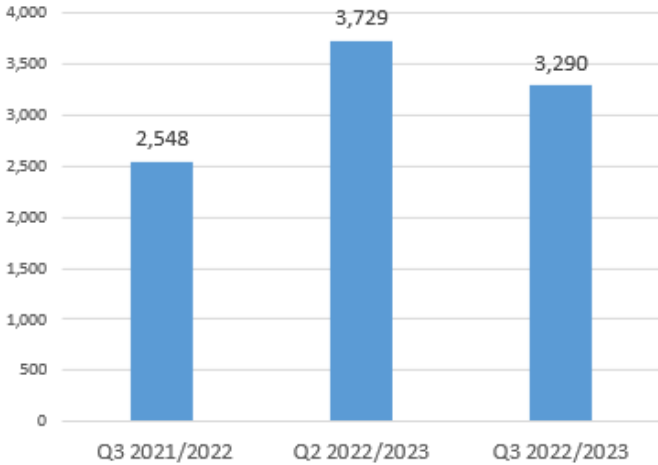
	Indicator	Service area	Reporting frequency	Results 2022/23	Comments & Benchmarking (where available)								
					to be between 5 and 6 rough sleepers on the streets . The winter night shelter beds are fully utilised on most nights.								
22.	Throughput of Watford Leisure Centre: Woodside	Leisure, Community & Environ'tal Services  Associate Director of Environment	Quarterly	<p><b>RESULT: 146,653</b></p>  <table border="1"> <caption>Throughput Watford Leisure Centre - Woodside</caption> <thead> <tr> <th>Quarter</th> <th>Throughput</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Q3 2021/2022</td> <td>104,249</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Q2 2022/2023</td> <td>150,703</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Q3 2022/2023</td> <td>146,653</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Quarter	Throughput	Q3 2021/2022	104,249	Q2 2022/2023	150,703	Q3 2022/2023	146,653	<p><b>No target set at this time</b></p> <p>Q3 usually sees a decrease in participation leading up to the Christmas period. SLM takes this opportunity to increase marketing for all sessions. In Q3 Fortis Challenges were promoted in addition to a £1 joining fee campaign.</p>
Quarter	Throughput												
Q3 2021/2022	104,249												
Q2 2022/2023	150,703												
Q3 2022/2023	146,653												
23.	Membership of Watford Leisure Centre: Woodside	Leisure, Community & Environ'tal Services  Associate Director of Environment	Quarterly	<p><b>RESULT: 4,985</b></p>	<p><b>No target set at this time</b></p> <p>Q3 usually sees a decrease in participation leading up to the Christmas period. The service introduced a new referral campaign, accessed through the app, to refer a friend to get one month membership for free.</p>								

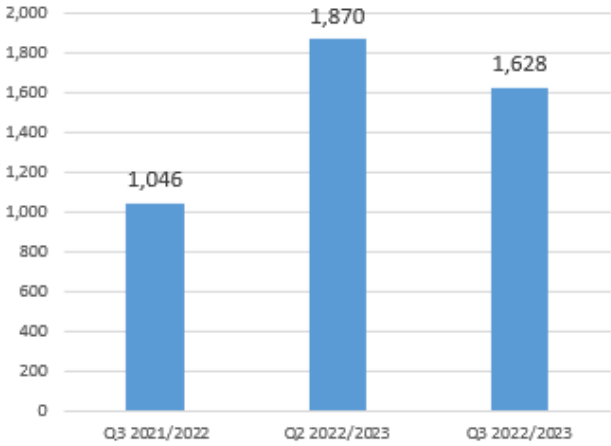
	Indicator	Service area	Reporting frequency	Results 2022/23	Comments & Benchmarking (where available)								
				<p style="text-align: center;">Membership Watford Leisure Centre - Woodside</p>  <table border="1" style="margin-left: auto; margin-right: auto;"> <thead> <tr> <th>Quarter</th> <th>Membership</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Q3 2021/2022</td> <td>3,992</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Q2 2022/2023</td> <td>5,163</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Q3 2022/2023</td> <td>4,985</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Quarter	Membership	Q3 2021/2022	3,992	Q2 2022/2023	5,163	Q3 2022/2023	4,985	
Quarter	Membership												
Q3 2021/2022	3,992												
Q2 2022/2023	5,163												
Q3 2022/2023	4,985												
24.	Watford Leisure Centre - Woodside - swimming lessons take up	Leisure, Community & Environ'tal Services  Associate Director of Environment	Quarterly	<b>RESULT: 2,079</b>	<p><b>No target set at this time</b></p> <p>Q3 usually sees a decrease in participation leading up to the Christmas period. On the Everyone Active App, members can now use a QR code to sign up to swimming lessons.</p>								



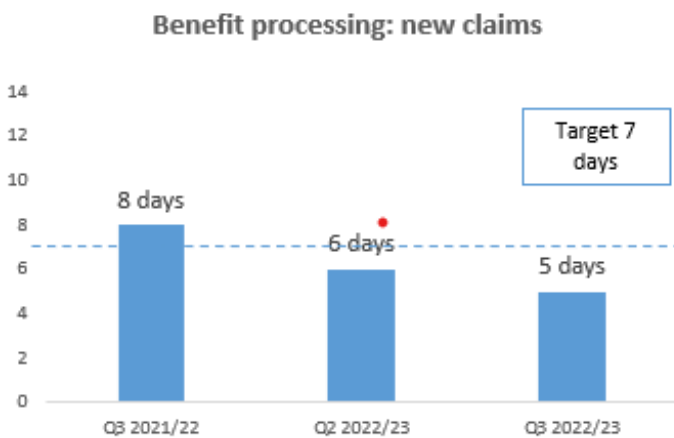

	Indicator	Service area	Reporting frequency	Results 2022/23	Comments & Benchmarking (where available)								
				<p style="text-align: center;">Swimming Lessons take up - Woodside</p>  <table border="1" style="margin-left: auto; margin-right: auto;"> <thead> <tr> <th>Quarter</th> <th>Take up</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Q3 2021/2022</td> <td>1,981</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Q2 2022/2023</td> <td>2,189</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Q3 2022/2023</td> <td>2,079</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Quarter	Take up	Q3 2021/2022	1,981	Q2 2022/2023	2,189	Q3 2022/2023	2,079	
Quarter	Take up												
Q3 2021/2022	1,981												
Q2 2022/2023	2,189												
Q3 2022/2023	2,079												
25.	Throughput of Watford Leisure Centre: Central	Leisure, Community & Environ'tal Services  Associate Director of Environment	Quarterly	<b>RESULT: 109,486</b>	<p><b>No target set at this time</b></p> <p>The closure of West Herts College during Christmas period impacted on Q3 throughput numbers, in addition to the usual decrease in participation leading up to Christmas period. SLM takes this opportunity to increase marketing for all sessions.</p>								

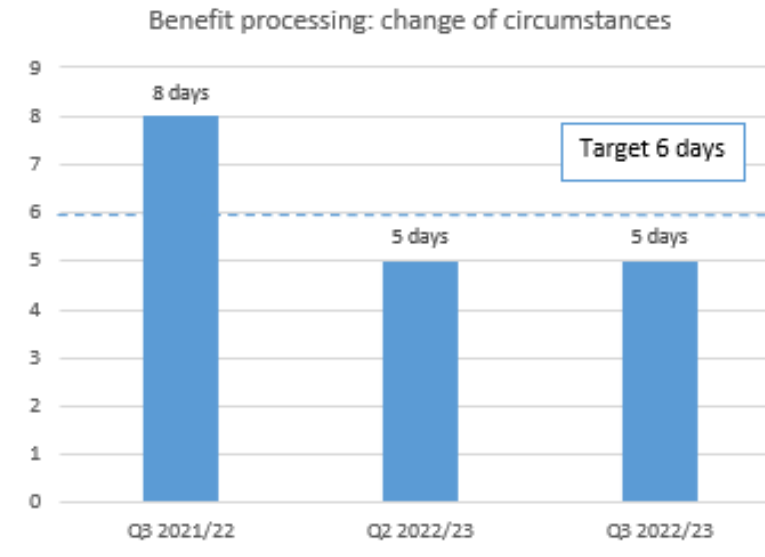
	Indicator	Service area	Reporting frequency	Results 2022/23	Comments & Benchmarking (where available)								
				<p style="text-align: center;">Throughput - Watford Leisure Centre Central</p>  <table border="1" style="margin-left: auto; margin-right: auto;"> <thead> <tr> <th>Quarter</th> <th>Throughput</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Q3 2021/2022</td> <td>59,512</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Q2 2022/2023</td> <td>165,180</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Q3 2022/2023</td> <td>109,486</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Quarter	Throughput	Q3 2021/2022	59,512	Q2 2022/2023	165,180	Q3 2022/2023	109,486	
Quarter	Throughput												
Q3 2021/2022	59,512												
Q2 2022/2023	165,180												
Q3 2022/2023	109,486												
26.	Membership of Watford Leisure Centre: Central	Leisure, Community & Environ'tal Services  Associate Director of Environment	Quarterly	<b>RESULT: 3,290</b>	<p><b>No target set at this time</b></p> <p>Q3 usually sees a decrease in participation leading up to the Christmas period. The service introduced a new referral campaign, accessed through the app, to refer a friend to get one month membership for free.</p>								




	Indicator	Service area	Reporting frequency	Results 2022/23	Comments & Benchmarking (where available)								
				<p style="text-align: center;">Membership - Watford Leisure Centre Central</p>  <table border="1" style="margin-left: auto; margin-right: auto;"> <thead> <tr> <th>Quarter</th> <th>Membership</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Q3 2021/2022</td> <td>2,548</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Q2 2022/2023</td> <td>3,729</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Q3 2022/2023</td> <td>3,290</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Quarter	Membership	Q3 2021/2022	2,548	Q2 2022/2023	3,729	Q3 2022/2023	3,290	
Quarter	Membership												
Q3 2021/2022	2,548												
Q2 2022/2023	3,729												
Q3 2022/2023	3,290												
27..	Watford Leisure Centre – Central - swimming lessons take up	Leisure, Community & Environ'tal Services  Associate Director of Environment	Quarterly	<b>Q4 RESULT: 1,628</b>	<b>No target set at this time</b>  Q3 usually sees a decrease in participation leading up to the Christmas period. The service introduced a new referral campaign, accessed through the app, to refer a friend to get one month membership for free.								


	Indicator	Service area	Reporting frequency	Results 2022/23	Comments & Benchmarking (where available)								
				<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Watford Leisure Centre - Central - swimming lesson take up</b></p>  <table border="1" style="margin-left: auto; margin-right: auto;"> <thead> <tr> <th>Quarter</th> <th>Take up</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Q3 2021/2022</td> <td>1,046</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Q2 2022/2023</td> <td>1,870</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Q3 2022/2023</td> <td>1,628</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Quarter	Take up	Q3 2021/2022	1,046	Q2 2022/2023	1,870	Q3 2022/2023	1,628	
Quarter	Take up												
Q3 2021/2022	1,046												
Q2 2022/2023	1,870												
Q3 2022/2023	1,628												

**Council Plan Theme: A Council working for our community and serving our residents**



	Indicator	Service area	Reporting frequency	Results 2022/23	Comments & Benchmarking (where available)										
28.	Average time to process housing benefits claims (from date of receipt to date processed)	Revenues & Benefits  Head of Revenues and Benefits	Monthly	<p><b>RESULT: 5 days</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Benefit processing: new claims</b></p>  <table border="1" style="margin-left: auto; margin-right: auto;"> <caption>Benefit processing: new claims - Average time to process</caption> <thead> <tr> <th>Quarter</th> <th>Average time to process (days)</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Q3 2021/22</td> <td>8 days</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Q2 2022/23</td> <td>6 days</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Q3 2022/23</td> <td>5 days</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Target</td> <td>7 days</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Quarter	Average time to process (days)	Q3 2021/22	8 days	Q2 2022/23	6 days	Q3 2022/23	5 days	Target	7 days	<p style="text-align: center;"></p> <p><b>A low result is good for this indicator</b></p> <p><b>TARGET: 7 days</b></p> <p>Result was 2 days below target for Q3. The service continues to contact customers to provide information when required, however it is also now making more use of data available internally to process claims. The service has recently updated procedures, including those that confirm what proof is required to make a claim. This has resulted in less requests for information required for customers.</p>
Quarter	Average time to process (days)														
Q3 2021/22	8 days														
Q2 2022/23	6 days														
Q3 2022/23	5 days														
Target	7 days														


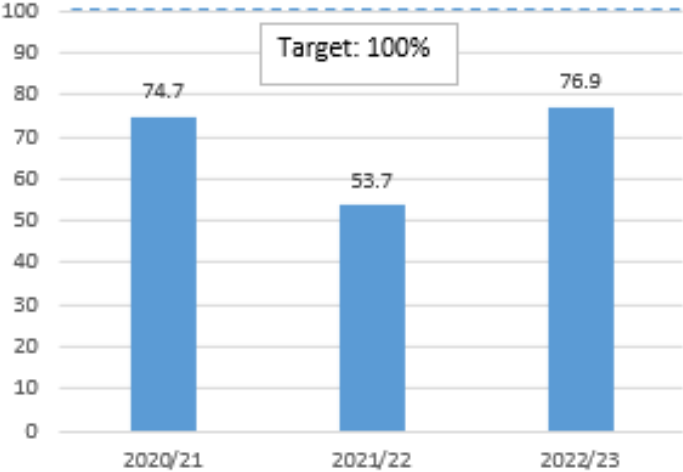

	Indicator	Service area	Reporting frequency	Results 2022/23	Comments & Benchmarking (where available)										
29.	Average time to process change of circumstances (from date of receipt to date processed)	Revenues & Benefits  Head of Revenues and Benefits	Monthly	<p><b>RESULT: 5 days</b></p>  <table border="1"> <caption>Benefit processing: change of circumstances</caption> <thead> <tr> <th>Quarter</th> <th>Processing Time (days)</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Q3 2021/22</td> <td>8</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Q2 2022/23</td> <td>5</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Q3 2022/23</td> <td>5</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Target</td> <td>6</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Quarter	Processing Time (days)	Q3 2021/22	8	Q2 2022/23	5	Q3 2022/23	5	Target	6	<p>↓</p> <p>A low result is good for this indicator</p> <p><b>TARGET: 6 days</b></p> <p>Result is 1 day below target, and 3 days below Q3 last year. Automation of some files has helped reduce our change of circumstance processing times.</p>
Quarter	Processing Time (days)														
Q3 2021/22	8														
Q2 2022/23	5														
Q3 2022/23	5														
Target	6														
30.	Value of outstanding invoices <12 months old compared to total raised in a rolling 12 month period	Revenues & Benefits  Head of Revenues and Benefits	Monthly	<p><b>RESULT: 1.09%</b></p>	<p>↓</p> <p>A low result is good for this indicator</p> <p><b>Target: 3% or less</b></p>										



	Indicator	Service area	Reporting frequency	Results 2022/23	Comments & Benchmarking (where available)
31.	Value of outstanding invoices over 12 months	Revenues & Benefits  Head of Revenues and Benefits	Monthly	<b>RESULT: 15.25%</b>	  <b>A low result is good for this indicator</b>  <b>Target: 10 % or less</b>  This figure excludes secured charging orders of £28,068.42
32.	% payment classified as 'LA error'	Revenues & Benefits  Head of Revenues and Benefits	Monthly	<b>RESULT: 0.07%</b>  LA error arises when a mistake is made and/or the council have been slow in processing changes resulting in overpayments. If the overall LA error rate is :  >0.54% - NIL subsidy received on overpayments caused by LA error  <0.54>0.48% - 40% subsidy received on overpayments caused by LA error  <b>&lt;0.48% 100% subsidy received</b>	  <b>A low result is good for this indicator</b>  <b>Target: 0.48% or less</b>
33.	Collection rates of council tax	Revenues & Benefits  Head of Revenues and Benefits	Monthly	<b>RESULT: 80%</b>	  <b>A high result is good for this indicator</b>  <b>Target for 2022/23 : 97%</b> <b>Quarter 3 target: 73%</b>



	Indicator	Service area	Reporting frequency	Results 2022/23	Comments & Benchmarking (where available)
					The result is 0.6 % down on last year, however still on track to reach the end of year target. The reduction when compared with last year is largely because of the ERG payment credits being refunded.
34.	Collection rates of NNDR	Revenues & Benefits  Head of Revenues and Benefits	Monthly	<b>RESULT: 83.04%</b>	 <p><b>A high result is good for this indicator</b></p> <p><b>Target for 2022/23 : 97%</b> <b>Quarter 3 target: 73%</b></p> <p>The result is 4.31% up on last year, and on track to reach the end of year target. The increase when compared with last year is mainly due to no additional retail relief in 2022/23.</p>
35.	Creditor payments paid within 30 days	Finance  Head of Revenues and Benefits	Quarterly	<b>RESULT: 98.74%</b>	<p><b>No target set at this time</b></p> <p>Cumulative data shows 98.74% of invoices have been paid within 30 days.</p>







	Indicator	Service area	Reporting frequency	Results 2022/23	Comments & Benchmarking (where available)
36.	Sickness absence (working days lost per employee, rolling 12 month rate)	Human Resources Head of HR	Monthly	<b>RESULT: 4.08 days</b>	 A low result is good for this indicator  <b>TARGET: 5 days</b>
37.	Staff sickness – long term / short term	Human Resources Head of HR	Monthly	<b>RESULT:</b>  Short term absences – 61 Long term absences – 1  <b>Comparison with Quarter 2:</b> Short term absences -36 Long term absences - 3  These figures relate to absences started within the relevant quarter.	<b>No target set</b>
38.	Staff satisfaction taken from PDRs	Human Resources Head of HR	Monthly	<b>RESULT: 7.6</b>  The PDR cycle was launched at the end of June with a target completion date of 31st August. The completion date was then extended to the 14 <sup>th</sup> of October.	  A high result is good for this indicator  <b>TARGET: 7.5</b>

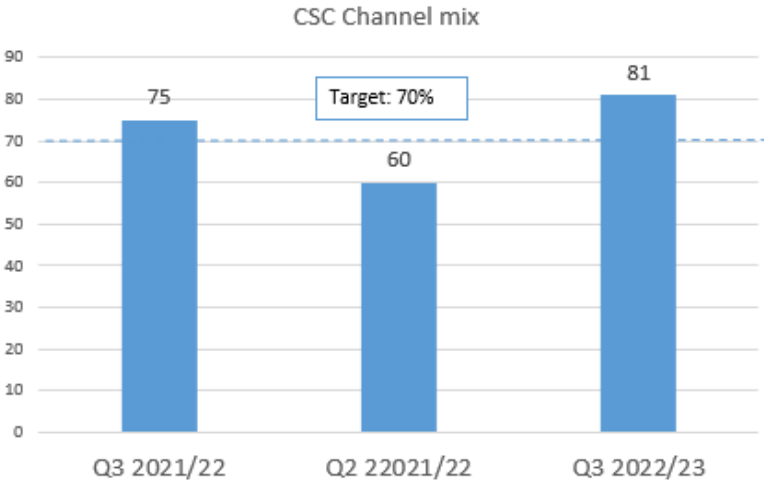

	Indicator	Service area	Reporting frequency	Results 2022/23	Comments & Benchmarking (where available)										
39.	Staff motivation taken from PDRs	Human Resources  Head of HR	Monthly	<p><b>RESULT: 7.9</b></p> <p>The PDR cycle was launched at the end of June with a target completion date of 31st August. The completion date was then extended to the 14<sup>th</sup> of October.</p>	<p></p> <p>A high result is good for this indicator</p> <p><b>TARGET: 7.5</b></p>										
40.	PDRs completed on time	Human Resources  Head of HR	Annual	<p><b>RESULT: 76.9%</b></p> <p>The PDR cycle was launched at the end of June with a target completion date of 31st August. The completion date was then extended to the 14<sup>th</sup> of October.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">PDRs completed on time</p>  <table border="1"> <caption>PDRs completed on time</caption> <thead> <tr> <th>Year</th> <th>Percentage</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>2020/21</td> <td>74.7</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2021/22</td> <td>53.7</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2022/23</td> <td>76.9</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Target</td> <td>100%</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Year	Percentage	2020/21	74.7	2021/22	53.7	2022/23	76.9	Target	100%	<p></p> <p><b>TARGET: 100%</b></p>
Year	Percentage														
2020/21	74.7														
2021/22	53.7														
2022/23	76.9														
Target	100%														

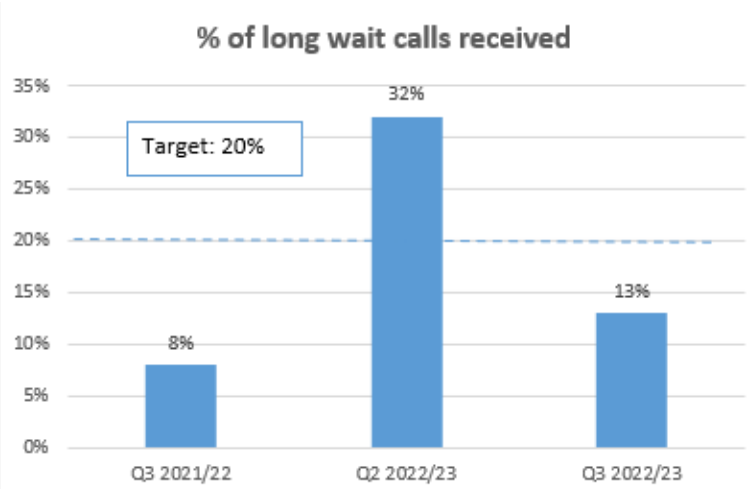
	Indicator	Service area	Reporting frequency	Results 2022/23	Comments & Benchmarking (where available)
41.	Return to work interviews carried out on time	Human Resources  Head of HR	Monthly	<b>RESULT: 68.50%</b>	 <b>A high result is good for this indicator</b>  <b>TARGET: 100%</b>  The primary reason for late completion is employee or manager being on annual leave.
42.	ICT service: Missed calls to the helpdesk	ICT  Associate Director of ICT & Shared Services	Monthly	<b>RESULT: 2%</b>	 <b>A low result is good for this indicator</b>  <b>TARGET: 8%</b>  <b>Watford BC / Three Rivers DC – shared result.</b>  Service desk answered 90% of calls within 20 seconds. Telephone contact with the service desk was an average of 23% of contact channels used in the quarter. This is similar to Q2.

	Indicator	Service area	Reporting frequency	Results 2022/23	Comments & Benchmarking (where available)
43.	Customer satisfaction survey  Responses where the service has been rated as meeting or exceeding expectations.	ICT  Associate Director of ICT & Shared Services	Monthly	<b>RESULT: 93%</b>	<b>No target set. Narrative indicator</b>  Average of 147 surveys completed each month. 11 survey rated the service as poor during Oct-Dec. One of these was an error by the user who was happy with the service but clicked the wrong score. The rest have been followed up by Littlefish and are reviewed at monthly service meetings. Users are not always putting a reason for their score and they are followed up. Littlefish will be copying W3R ICT into the follow-up e-mails going forward to encourage responses.
44.	First time fix  (first time fix statistics are calculated by the ME system as an incident being closed 30 minutes post creation)	ICT  Associate Director of ICT & Shared Services	Quarterly	<b>RESULT: 96%</b>	 <b>A high result is good for this indicator</b>  <b>TARGET: 45%</b>  Littlefish live is still the most popular contact channel. Littlefish first contact resolution remains high.
45.	Tickets closed per team	ICT  Associate Director of ICT & Shared Services	Quarterly	<b>RESULT: 94%</b>	 <b>A high result is good for this indicator</b>  <b>TARGET: 80%</b>

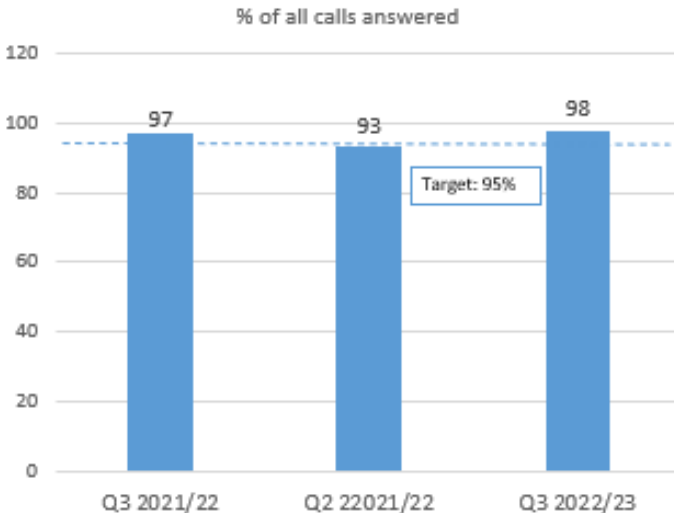

	Indicator	Service area	Reporting frequency	Results 2022/23	Comments & Benchmarking (where available)
					Continued consistent performance by Littlefish. ICT team promote the service desk as first point of contact.
46.	Tickets against service levels	ICT  Associate Director of ICT & Shared Services	Quarterly	<b>RESULT: 97%</b>	 <b>A high result is good for this indicator</b> <b>TARGET: 95%</b> ICT work closely with Littlefish to update knowledge articles so Littlefish can resolve tickets in a timely manner. Further work taking place on identifying areas where Littlefish can assist further with service requests.
47.	Network Uptime Local Area Network:	ICT  Associate Director of ICT & Shared Services	Quarterly	<b>RESULT: 100%</b>  Network uptime defined as availability of local area network across all primary sites, Watford Borough Council, Three Rivers District Council. This would be measured through P1 and major incident notification	 <b>A high result is good for this indicator</b> <b>TARGET: 99%</b>  No local network incidents in Q3.
48.	Core System Uptime:	ICT  Associate Director of ICT & Shared Services	Quarterly	<b>RESULT: 99.9%</b>  Core systems uptime defined as the available of all priority 1 applications.  Downtime to be recorded as full system unavailable, not partial, the time from call logged to call resolution.	 <b>A high result is good for this indicator</b> <b>TARGET: 99%</b>

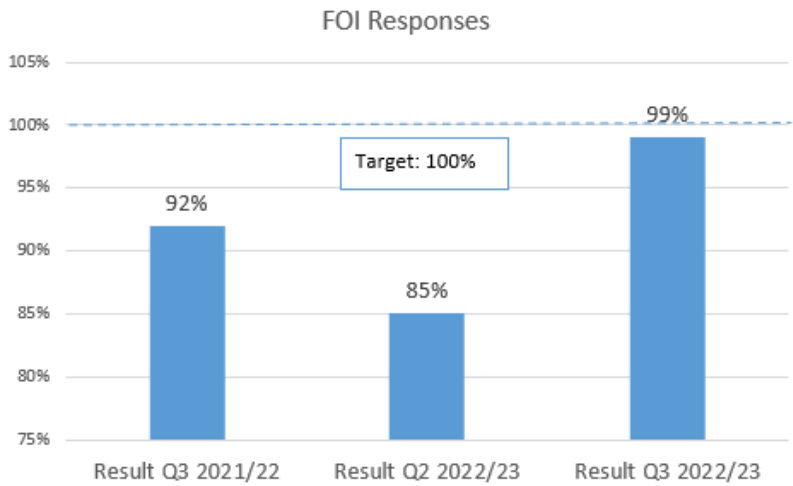
	Indicator	Service area	Reporting frequency	Results 2022/23	Comments & Benchmarking (where available)
					<p>This figure is calculated across 14 priority applications across both councils.</p> <p>Total of 3 Priority 1 incidents for Oct-Dec: 1 – Oct 2 – Nov 0 – Dec</p> <p>October – incident logged with IDOX for WBC and resolved by them. Issue was resolved in 90 mins. November – one incident related to WBC elections IDOX. Issue was resolved in 30 minutes. One incident regarding Revenues and Benefits server affecting TRDC, resolved by Civica. Resolved in 105 minutes. Mitigation was applied to both councils. December – security incident was worked on by both Littlefish and W3R ICT Teams, including the roll-out of MFA.</p>
49.	Network Uptime Wide Area Network:	ICT  Associate Director of ICT & Shared Services	Quarterly	<p><b>RESULT: 100%</b></p> <p>Network uptime defined as availability of wide area network across all connected sites, Watford Borough Council, Three Rivers District Council, Batchworth and Wiggshall Depots</p>	<p></p> <p><b>A high result is good for this indicator</b></p> <p><b>TARGET: 99%</b></p> <p>No wide area network incidents recorded in Q3.</p>

	Indicator	Service area	Reporting frequency	Results 2022/23	Comments & Benchmarking (where available)										
50.	CSC - Channel mix (% transactions that customers self-serve)	Customer Services  Associate Director of Customer and Corporate Services	Quarterly	<p><b>RESULT: 81%</b></p> <p>* for those processes for which data is currently available, which are those that have been digitised on the Firmstep platform.</p>  <table border="1"> <caption>CSC Channel mix</caption> <thead> <tr> <th>Quarter</th> <th>Percentage</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Q3 2021/22</td> <td>75</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Q2 2021/22</td> <td>60</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Q3 2022/23</td> <td>81</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Target</td> <td>70%</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Quarter	Percentage	Q3 2021/22	75	Q2 2021/22	60	Q3 2022/23	81	Target	70%	<p></p> <p><b>A high result is good for this indicator</b></p> <p><b>TARGET 70%</b></p> <p>The majority of online customer contact in Q3 was via the General enquiry online form.</p> <p>See graph included with a break down of the services that the general enquiries related to.</p>
Quarter	Percentage														
Q3 2021/22	75														
Q2 2021/22	60														
Q3 2022/23	81														
Target	70%														

	Indicator	Service area	Reporting frequency	Results 2022/23	Comments & Benchmarking (where available)												
				<p># General Enquiry Submissions ▼</p>  <table border="1"> <caption># General Enquiry Submissions</caption> <thead> <tr> <th>Category</th> <th>Submissions</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Council Tax</td> <td>517</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Parking</td> <td>133</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Environmental Health</td> <td>95</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Housing</td> <td>95</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Rubbish and Recycling</td> <td>93</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Category	Submissions	Council Tax	517	Parking	133	Environmental Health	95	Housing	95	Rubbish and Recycling	93	
Category	Submissions																
Council Tax	517																
Parking	133																
Environmental Health	95																
Housing	95																
Rubbish and Recycling	93																
Page 312	<p>51. Long wait calls received to CSC Long wait = calls not answered within 2 minutes  (Revenues and Benefits calls are not included)</p>	<p>Customer Services  Associate Director of Customer and Corporate Services</p>	<p>Monthly</p>	<p><b>RESULT: 13%</b></p>  <table border="1"> <caption>% of long wait calls received</caption> <thead> <tr> <th>Quarter</th> <th>% of long wait calls received</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Q3 2021/22</td> <td>8%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Q2 2022/23</td> <td>32%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Q3 2022/23</td> <td>13%</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p>Target: 20%</p>	Quarter	% of long wait calls received	Q3 2021/22	8%	Q2 2022/23	32%	Q3 2022/23	13%	<p></p> <p><b>A low result is good for this indicator</b></p> <p><b>TARGET: 20%</b></p> <p>The recruitment of 2.5 FTE and 1 Corporate Apprentice has helped the service achieve the target in Q3. All new starters were fully trained on all services from mid-December. Also with December being a shorter working month, customer contact quiets down towards the Christmas period.</p>				
Quarter	% of long wait calls received																
Q3 2021/22	8%																
Q2 2022/23	32%																
Q3 2022/23	13%																



	Indicator	Service area	Reporting frequency	Results 2022/23	Comments & Benchmarking (where available)										
52.	CSC service levels: Percentage of all calls answered	Customer Services  Associate Director of Customer and Corporate Services	Monthly	<p><b>RESULT: 98%</b></p>  <table border="1"> <caption>% of all calls answered</caption> <thead> <tr> <th>Quarter</th> <th>% of all calls answered</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Q3 2021/22</td> <td>97</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Q2 2021/22</td> <td>93</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Q3 2022/23</td> <td>98</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Target</td> <td>95%</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Quarter	% of all calls answered	Q3 2021/22	97	Q2 2021/22	93	Q3 2022/23	98	Target	95%	<p></p> <p><b>A high result is good for this indicator</b></p> <p><b>TARGET: 95%</b></p> <p>Energy rebate refunds increased calls to the CSC by 217% when compared with the same quarter last year. High absence levels and vacancies over the past 3 months also affected service levels. The service have now recruited 3.5 contracted FTE to cover current vacancies within the CSC. They are currently being trained and will be ready for duties by the end of November.</p>
Quarter	% of all calls answered														
Q3 2021/22	97														
Q2 2021/22	93														
Q3 2022/23	98														
Target	95%														

	Indicator	Service area	Reporting frequency	Results 2022/23	Comments & Benchmarking (where available)										
53.	CSC service levels:  FOI's responded to within 20 working days	Customer Services  Associate Director of Customer and Corporate Services	Quarterly	<p><b>RESULT: 99%</b></p>  <table border="1"> <caption>FOI Responses Data</caption> <thead> <tr> <th>Quarter</th> <th>Result (%)</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Result Q3 2021/22</td> <td>92%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Result Q2 2022/23</td> <td>85%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Result Q3 2022/23</td> <td>99%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Target</td> <td>100%</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Quarter	Result (%)	Result Q3 2021/22	92%	Result Q2 2022/23	85%	Result Q3 2022/23	99%	Target	100%	<p>↓</p> <p><b>A high result is good for this indicator</b></p> <p><b>TARGET: 100%</b></p> <p>The result has significantly improved in Q3, due to CSC staff proactively monitoring FOI's moving through the system and chasing them up where needed. In additional staff from other departments are becoming more aware of the importance of responding to FOI's within timescales. Also during Q3, staff outside of the CSC responsible for monitoring FOI's, were given access to FOI reports produced by the corporate reporting platform, with the aim of increasing visibility of FOI's moving through the system and their due dates.</p> <p>Request breakdown: 62 from organisations 31 from members of the public 15 from the media</p>
Quarter	Result (%)														
Result Q3 2021/22	92%														
Result Q2 2022/23	85%														
Result Q3 2022/23	99%														
Target	100%														

**Report to:** Cabinet  
**Date of meeting:** 13<sup>th</sup> March 2023  
**Report author:** Corporate Procurement Manager  
**Title:** Procurement of Energy Contracts

## 1.0 Summary

- 1.1 Watford Borough Council procures electricity and gas through a managed framework provided by Laser Buying Group. The current contract arrangement with the Laser Buying Group ends in September 2024 but there is a need to agree entry into a new contract now to allow the successful contractor to procure energy on behalf of the council in advance of the 2024 commencement date.
- 1.2 The contract will operate for 4 years up until 31<sup>st</sup> August 2028.
- 1.3 The report seeks approval to award the new contract to Laser Buying Group.

## 2.0 Recommendations

- 2.1 To award the energy contract to Laser Buying Group from 1 September 2024 to 31 August 2028.

### Further information:

Derek Hatcher – Corporate Procurement Manager  
E-mail – derek.hatcher@watford.gov.uk  
Phone – 01923 278370

**Report approved by:** Carol Chen – Group Head of Democracy and Governance.

## 3.0 Detailed Report

- 3.1 Watford Borough Council (WBC) procures electricity and gas through a managed framework provided by Laser Buying Group. The current contract arrangement with the Laser Buying Group ends in September 2024 but there is a need to agree entry into a new contract now to allow the successful contractor to procure energy on behalf of the council in advance of the 2024 commencement date. This is a joint procurement between WBC and Three Rivers District Council. The new agreement will be for 4 years from 1 September 2024 until 31 August 2028.
- 3.2 WBC currently procures electricity and gas through a managed framework provided by Laser Buying Group together with Three Rivers District Council. Both Councils' entered into this arrangement in 2015 following the disbandment of their own South West Herts Consortia. The utilities are required to provide energy to the councils' property portfolios including the Town Hall estate. Whilst this is a joint procurement each Council will enter

into its own supply agreement and choose its own options regarding how to procure (see 3.9).

WBC's current spend on energy over the past two years is £1.1m with 80% of that on electricity. These costs factor in the increased prices for 2022 and 2023. The consumption is not typical as the Town Hall and Colosseum have been shut over this period. It is expected that the long term forecast will see costs begin to reduce from 2024 onwards in line with the Town Hall reopening.

- 3.3 WBC procures its energy from the wholesale market. Over the past year, the price for both wholesale electricity and gas has become extremely volatile. WBC's energy bills are mainly made up of the cost of providing the energy (network) and the wholesale cost of gas or electricity. The wholesale cost is subject to market forces whereas network costs can be controlled through regulation. The costs of wholesale gas or electricity are largely driven by global trends.
- 3.4 The predominant cause of the price increases is the Russian invasion of Ukraine. Russia is the world's biggest exporter of gas with the EU sourcing around 40% of its gas from Russia. Whilst the UK is much less dependent, with previously around 4% of UK gas originating in Russia (now zero - there are no direct gas pipelines between Russia and the UK). Political reaction to events in Ukraine has resulted in Europe attempting to reduce its dependency on Russian gas which has had an effect on the market price. In addition to the above, the extreme market price movements are causing suppliers operational issues in terms of how they buy energy, and many are restricting price offers for new sites and customers. Electricity prices have also increased. Around 30-40% of the UK's electricity is produced from gas fired power stations and this has had an effect on electricity pricing.
- 3.5 To come to the recommendations of this paper, the Procurement Manager has undertaken a full market review of frameworks and purchasing options available for WBC to procure gas and electricity. These included; stay- with Laser, run our own tender or adopt a new framework. The review concluded that there would be no discernible benefit in changing to a different framework provider and the risk of WBC and Three Rivers operating their own tender could significantly impact pricing to the councils as the market rate risk would not be managed (see Risks – 4.1)
- 3.6 Therefore, the recommendation is to award the new contract to Laser Buying Group Buying Group. Laser was formed in 1989 by Kent County Council (KCC) with the aim of assisting local authorities and other public bodies to benefit from lower energy prices through deregulated gas and electricity markets and to offer management services that focus on reducing energy spend and manage market risk in an increasingly volatile market. The Laser Group has a strong track record in achieving savings for its customers with the table below showing average savings for its products.

	Electricity		Gas	
	PIA	PWP	PIA	PWP
<b>2019-20</b>	<b>-4.01%</b>	<b>-12.23%</b>	<b>2.67%</b>	<b>-14.93%</b>
<b>2020-21</b>	<b>-8.90%</b>	<b>-7.57%</b>	<b>-19.88%</b>	<b>-19.59%</b>
<b>2021-22</b>	<b>-13.90%</b>	<b>-4.20%</b>	<b>-27.90%</b>	<b>-11.70%</b>
<b>Average</b>	<b>-8.94%</b>	<b>-8.00%</b>	<b>-15.04%</b>	<b>-15.41%</b>

- 3.7 Laser Buying Group has advised that it has avoided cost increases of approximately 33% combined across both gas and electricity property portfolios for both councils' during the most volatile period. The true benefit has not been seen as the Government provided a cap for the winter months of 2022-23 (the councils' cost would have been around the same as the Government's capped figure).
- 3.8 By entering into the contract, WBC has the option to enter into initiatives to deliver its target of Carbon Net Zero by 2030. These opportunities will be re-published by Laser later this year for inclusion in the framework but they have currently been removed because of the significant take up by the public sector. These include Renewable Energy Guarantees Origin (REGO) and Power Purchase Agreements (PPA) to validate that green energy is procured. Officers will review and evaluate options at that time. It will also be necessary to ascertain the impact of its decarbonisation programme through its capital investment. These measures will be used to offset any carbon the WBC produces once the programme is complete. WBC could seek to use these in advance of the programme being completed but officers will bring a further paper to cabinet on any options available when they are reintroduced by Laser.
- 3.9 Under the Laser framework there are two key flexible procurement options provided to WBC to purchase energy with a different levels of risk and opportunity. Both WBC and Three Rivers are currently procuring the Purchase within Period (PWP) method. The PWP option facilitates the purchase of a portion of site volume prior to delivery for a six-month period, whilst the remaining volume may be purchased a month ahead or even a day ahead. The alternate model is to purchase in advance allowing volume to be purchased in advance of the 12 month term period and then those prices are fixed for a single year. The councils' are able to change the energy buying method at 6 monthly periods during the contract.

The recommendation is to stay with this method as the current long term forecast is that energy prices will drop and this option will provide the best opportunity to realise savings as currently forecast from 2024 - 2026. The method of procurement can be reviewed over the life of the contract and amended accordingly.

## Risk

4.1 The following table provides a summary of the perceived risks.

Nature of risk	Consequence	Suggested Control Measures	Response	Risk Rating
Energy Wholesale Market Risk	Procurement of energy through the wholesale markets and costs can increase	Procurement of energy is mitigated over a procurement window providing opportunities to buy across a time period from the wholesale market. The provider uses energy experts to decide when to buy at the right time. The mitigation is to spread the risk over time to ensure that the opportunities of lower pricing is realised and the risks of high pricing are mitigated. This provides a balanced price.	Tolerate	6
Budgeting Risk	Risk that budgets can increase midyear through our current Purchase Within Period Model	The model provides the opportunity to reduce costs if markets fall but does not provide budget certainty. WBC can switch to Purchase in Advance option to maintain accuracy of budgeting and only usage then affects the budget.	Treat	8
Cost of Living Crisis	Capped rate does not apply to WBC and costs increase in accordance with wholesale market  Or Rates increase in 2024 to pay for the current cap	Still need to procure in accordance with UK Procurement regulations Consider additional fees and budget accordingly. Forecast to decrease in 2024 but unknown world conditions (e.g. pandemic reduced costs – war increased)	Tolerate	6

## 5.0 Implications

### 5.1 Financial

5.1.1 There has been a significant increase in energy costs since February 2022 following the invasion of Ukraine by Russia.

## **5.2 Legal Issues (Monitoring Officer)**

- 5.2.1 The Group Head of Democracy and Governance comments that by entering in the contract with Laser the council is complying with the Public Procurement Regulations as this is secured under an already compliant framework.

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

- 5.3.1 There is no impact to Equalities, Human Rights and Data Protection from this report.

## **5.4 Data Processing Impact Assessment**

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.

## **5.5 Staffing**

- 5.5.1 There is no impact on staffing arising from this report.

## **5.6 Accommodation**

- 5.6.1 There is no impact on accommodation arising from this report.

## **5.7 Community Safety/Crime and Disorder**

- 5.7.1 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. Consequently, the implications of these proposals on crime and disorder have been considered and no impact either positive or negative has been identified.

## **5.8 Sustainability**

- 5.8.1 Currently the options to procure sustainable energy in the Laser contract are limited but it is intended these will be reintroduced later in 2023 when options will be evaluated and brought back to cabinet. The Council is currently undertaking works to the Town Hall and Colosseum to decarbonise and has applied for funding for other operational buildings with a view to increasing their energy efficiency.

## **Appendices and Background Papers**

- None

# Agenda Item 9

Part A

**Report to:** Cabinet

**Date of meeting:** Monday, 13 March 2023

**Report author:** Group Head of Democracy and Governance

**Title:** Appointment to Hart Homes (Watford) Limited and Hart Homes (Watford) Development LLP Operations Board

## 1.0 Summary

1.1 Shareholder Board received a report at its January meeting regarding the decision by the directors of Hart Homes (Watford) Limited and Hart Homes (Watford) Development LLP to create an operations board to enable both Watford Borough Council and Watford Community Housing to have greater oversight of the work of both the limited company and the LLP with regard to design and delivery of projects.

1.2 Shareholder Board endorsed the creation of the Operations Board and recommended to Cabinet the appointment of Julian Hart and Andrew Harris-Sanjivi as council representatives.

## 2.0 Risks

### 2.1

<b>Nature of risk</b>	<b>Consequence</b>	<b>Suggested Control Measures</b>	<b>Response</b> (treat, tolerate, terminate or transfer)	<b>Risk Rating</b> (combination of severity and likelihood)
Proposals from the companies come forward that do not have adequate input from council personnel	The council's perspective is not being taken into account and not meeting design, financial or housing expectations.	The establishment of the operations board with council representatives with the necessary skills and expertise.	Treat	2



### 3.0 **Recommendations**

- 3.1 That Julian Hart and Andrew Harris-Sanjivi be appointed to the Companies Operations Board.

**Further information:**

Carol Chen  
carol.chen@watford.gov.uk  
Tel: 01923 278350

**Report approved by: Donna Nolan**

### 4.0 **Detailed proposal**

- 4.1 At its meeting in January Shareholder Board endorsed a decision taken by the directors of both Hart Homes (Watford) Limited and Hart Homes (Watford) Development LLP to create an Operations Board to provide partnership stability at inception and long-term confidence in the management of the development programme for the companies. The Operations Board would replace the 6 weekly meetings previously held at officer level between the council and Watford Community Housing and put the arrangement on a more formal footing.
- 4.2 The Operations Board is to be made up of two officers from the council and two from Watford Community Housing with sufficient skills and expertise to advise the directors of the companies on development opportunities and viability of schemes. Cabinet is asked to nominate Julian Hart the council's senior regeneration manager and Andrew Harris-Sanjivi finance business partner to the Operations Board.

### 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 there are no legal implications in this report.

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

- 5.3.1 There are no implications.

#### 5.4 **Staffing**

5.4.1 These officers will be required to attend Operations Board meetings.

#### 5.5 **Accommodation**

5.5.1 No implications

#### 5.6 **Community Safety/Crime and Disorder**

5.6.1 No implications

#### 5.7 **Sustainability**

5.7.1 No implications.

### **Appendices**

None

### **Background papers**

No papers were used in the preparation of this report.

Part A

**Report to:** Cabinet

**Date of meeting:** Monday, 13 March 2023

**Report author:** Senior Democratic Services Officer

**Title:** Sustainability Strategy Task Group - final report

## 1.0 Summary

1.1 This report provides Cabinet with the final report and recommendations of the Sustainability Strategy Task Group. The full report is attached as Appendix 1.

1.2 The report was reviewed and approved by Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 1 February 2023. The minutes of the item are attached as Appendix 2.

## 2.0 Risks

2.1 No direct risks to the council have been identified as a result of the task group's recommendations.

## 3.0 Recommendations

3.1 That Cabinet approves the task group's recommendations:

1. To increase the target for the number of households who commit to making one change to live more sustainably to be more challenging; potentially to 50% of households.
2. Any off-setting required to meet the targets should be within Watford as much as possible.
3. The delivery plan for the Sustainability Strategy should be brought to Overview and Scrutiny Committee for review and discussion.
4. The Sustainability Strategy's delivery plan and accompanying documentation should include a risk register.
5. The updates on progress against net zero carbon targets should be published with and without the impacts of aviation and shipping.

6. To strengthen the consideration of the sustainability impacts in council decision-making processes, including having regard to the targets in the strategy.
7. A communications plan and behavioural change campaign will be required to ensure residents and businesses engage with the targets and feel part of the solution.

**Further information:**

Jodie Kloss

jodie.kloss@watford.gov.uk

**Report approved by: Carol Chen, Group Head of Democracy and Governance**

#### 4.0 **Background and overview**

- 4.1 Watford Borough Council has declared a climate emergency and an ecological emergency. The Sustainability Strategy is a pivotal document for the council to ensure its response as an organisation and a place leader meets the urgency of the climate and ecological emergencies.
- 4.2 The council's existing Sustainability Strategy expires in March 2023. There has been a programme of work to renew this strategy with an updated and refocused document to come into force at that time. The development of the strategy included an engagement exercise with residents and groups in late 2022 which will help to shape the focus. The work of the task group is intended to feed into the development of the strategy alongside this programme of work.
- 4.3 Overview and Scrutiny Committee agreed to establish the task group at its meeting on 22 June 2022 and confirmed the membership and chair in October 2022. The task group included the following members:
  - Councillor Mark Hofman (Chair)
  - Councillor Peter Jeffree
  - Councillor Rabi Martins
  - Councillor Sara-Jane Trebar
- 4.4 The task group met virtually on three occasions in November and December 2022. At the outset, it was agreed that the task group would focus on the following areas:
  - Targets contained in the strategy
  - Leading by example
  - People Power
  - Governance

4.5 During the course of the meetings, the task group received presentations from Watford Borough Council officers on the above areas and discussed the proposals contained within the draft strategy.

## 5.0 **Implications**

### 5.1 **Financial**

5.1.1 The Shared Director of Finance comments that the recommendations arising from the work of the task group do not result in any direct financial implications. Where there are budgetary requirements arising from the delivery of the objectives in the Sustainability Strategy, these will be subject to approval through the Council's budget setting framework.

### 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 There are no specific implications in this report.

### 5.4 **Staffing**

5.4.1 There are no staffing implications in this report.

### 5.5 **Accommodation**

5.5.1 There are no accommodation implications in this report.

### 5.6 **Community Safety/Crime and Disorder**

5.6.1 There are no community safety implications in this report.

### 5.7 **Sustainability**

5.7.1 This is captured in the body of the report and appendix.

## **Appendices**

Appendix 1 – Sustainability Strategy Task Group report

Appendix 2 – Extract from minutes of Overview and Scrutiny Committee

## **Background papers**

There are no specific background papers for this report. All background information used during the task group's work is referenced in the final report.



## **Sustainability Strategy Task Group**

**January 2023**

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**Task group members**

Councillor Mark Hofman  
Councillor Peter Jeffree  
Councillor Rabi Martins  
Councillor Sara-Jane Trebar

Chair, Councillor for Nascot Ward  
Councillor for Park Ward  
Councillor for Central Ward  
Councillor for Vicarage Ward

**Officer support**

Jodie Kloss  
Laura MacMillan

Senior Democratic Services Officer  
Democratic Services Officer

**Witnesses**

Susheel Rao  
Alan Gough

Sustainability Officer, Watford Borough Council  
Director of Partnerships, Watford Borough Council

**Proposed recommendations to present to Overview and Scrutiny Committee**

1. To increase the target for the number of households who commit to making one change to live more sustainably to be more challenging; potentially to 50% of households.
2. Any off-setting required to meet the targets should be within Watford as much as possible.
3. The delivery plan for the Sustainability Strategy should be brought to Overview and Scrutiny Committee for review and discussion.
4. The Sustainability Strategy's delivery plan and accompanying documentation should include a risk register.
5. The updates on progress against net zero carbon targets should be published with and without the impacts of aviation and shipping.
6. To strengthen the consideration of the sustainability impacts in council decision-making processes, including having regard to the targets in the strategy.
7. A communications plan and behavioural change campaign will be required to ensure residents and businesses engage with the targets and feel part of the solution.

## **Background to the task group**

Watford Borough Council has declared a climate emergency and an ecological emergency. The Sustainability Strategy is a pivotal document for the council to ensure its response as an organisation and a place leader meets the urgency of the climate and ecological emergencies.

The council's existing Sustainability Strategy expires in March 2023. There is a programme of work to renew this strategy with an updated and refocused document to come into force at that time. The development of the strategy includes an engagement exercise with residents and groups in late 2022 which will help to shape the focus.

A proposal was made by the Portfolio Holder for Sustainability and Transport that a scrutiny task group be established to ensure that non-executive councillors could feed into the strategy.

Overview and Scrutiny Committee agreed to establish the task group at its meeting on 22 June 2022 and confirmed the membership and chair in October 2022, as set out above.

## **Overview of the task group's programme of work**

The task group met three times in November and December 2022. At the initial meeting, members received a high-level overview of the strategy and the associated programme. It was agreed that the task group would focus on certain key areas within the strategy. These were: targets, leading by example, people power and governance.

Following the first two meetings, the work of the task group paused while the consultation exercise took place. The task group then reviewed the high-level outcomes of the consultation exercise alongside their conclusions and recommendations. The meetings took the form of presentations from the programme's lead officers at Watford Borough Council followed by discussions, questions and consideration of conclusions and recommendations.

The areas of the strategy that the task group focused on were:

- Targets contained in the strategy
- Governance
- Leading by example
- People power

Additional work was carried out by Democratic Services to inform the task group's work and to produce this report

## Conclusion, recommendations and comments

### Summary of the task group's response to the Sustainability Strategy

The Sustainability Strategy is an ambitious and vital strategy which will provide the requisite focus to deliver a more sustainable town. The Climate and Ecological Emergencies are urgent issues which require timely action by the council as an organisation and as a place leader.

The targets are largely stretching and will require a whole-organisation and whole-borough commitment to ensure delivery by 2030. It is imperative that Watford contributes to the global response, but it is also clear that there are areas over which the council, as well as local businesses and residents, have no control and where a realistic approach is needed. This interconnectedness is reflected in the requirement for off-setting to be part of the response.

Achieving the targets will be challenging; it is vital that the council continues to work with residents to encourage and enable them to make changes to live more sustainably. Ongoing communication, listening, and engagement will remain fundamental to the success of the strategy.

### Recommendations

#### **To increase the target for the number of households who commit to making one change to live more sustainably to be more challenging; potentially to 50% of households.**

The target in the strategy is for 25% of Watford households to pledge at least one action towards achieving net zero by 2028. These actions might be making changes to their diet, transportation or energy usage in the home.

The 2021 census demonstrated that Watford is a young town; 55% of residents are aged under 40, compared to 49% across England and Wales<sup>1</sup>. Data consistently shows that young people are more likely to be concerned about environmental issues than older people.<sup>2</sup> There is also evidence that during and Covid 19 pandemic, people were increasingly more likely to make lifestyle changes to reflect these sustainability concerns, which was driven by Generation Z and millennials.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> 2021 ONS census results

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/populationandmigration/populationestimates/bulletins/populationandhouseholdestimatesenglandandwales/census2021>

<sup>2</sup> 2021 ONS survey on climate anxiety

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/wellbeing/articles/threequartersofadultsingreatbritainworryaboutclimatechange/2021-11-05>

<sup>3</sup> Deloitte study on lifestyle changes during the pandemic <https://www2.deloitte.com/uk/en/pages/press-releases/articles/four-out-of-five-uk-consumers-adopt-more-sustainable-lifestyle-choices-during-covid-19-pandemic.html>

The task group also noted that the pandemic had demonstrated how significant behavioural changes across all areas were possible to reflect an urgent issue. The increase in the level of this target, potentially to 50%, would therefore reflect these trends.

**Any off-setting required to meet the targets should be within Watford as much as possible.**

The strategy notes that 'The Council will seek to offset GHG (greenhouse gas) emissions within the UK, using recognised and accredited providers. It will also ensure that its own tree planting can be recognised as carbon offsetting.'<sup>4</sup>

It is anticipated that by 2030, the council will have reduced its GHG emissions by 75% with the remaining 25% being offset. Off-setting will be achieved through tree-planting and photovoltaic energy generation.

Tree-planting and other off-setting measures have other net benefits to the local environment, such as improving air quality and biodiversity and reducing flooding risks. The aim should therefore be for these measures to be taken within Watford, with a focus on the areas where tree cover is lowest, wherever practicable.

**The delivery plan for the Sustainability Strategy should be brought to Overview and Scrutiny Committee for review and discussion.**

The strategy is a high-level document setting the context, priorities, targets and governance of the sustainability agenda in Watford. It will be underpinned by a detailed delivery plan which will set out how the targets will be achieved.

The task group has only had sight of the draft strategy and made recommendations on that document. A number of other areas were discussed which related to the delivery of the strategy, and these would benefit from further discussion as part of the scrutiny function.

It is further noted that the Climate Emergency and Sustainability Forum will also retain working oversight of the delivery plan and other routine reporting mechanisms will be followed.

**The Sustainability Strategy's delivery plan and accompanying documentation should include a risk register.**

The task group understood that the intention was for the strategy documentation to include a risk register. This was strongly supported to ensure that the momentum of delivery was maintained. It was also important that the risks of inaction in the climate and sustainability agendas were well documented and communicated.

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<sup>4</sup> Sustainability Strategy, p. 12

**The updates on progress against net zero carbon targets should be published with and without the impacts of aviation and shipping.**

Reducing the carbon emissions of the borough as a whole is particularly challenging; the strategy rightly recognises that there are areas that the council has little influence over. With appropriate actions in place, the overall level of emissions in the borough can be reduced by 50%. The methodology used to calculate carbon emissions, used by many local authorities, includes a fair share of aviation and shipping emissions which contribute a huge amount of emissions to the overall total. The result will be that progress against targets will be limited by factors outside of its control.

The task group therefore proposes that progress against the net zero carbon targets be reported including and excluding the impacts of these sectors. This will mean that the council and residents will have a better sense of the progress being made locally and it will demonstrate the impact of flying and other transportation to the overall climate agenda. The task group noted that this could provide an opportunity to produce an education piece around the impact of flying.

**To strengthen the consideration of the sustainability impacts in council decision-making processes, including having regard to the targets in the strategy.**

Meeting the targets will require a whole-organisation approach including a commitment to ensure that sustainability implications are carefully considered in decision-making. The council's committee reports currently include sustainability implications and it is suggested that this is strengthened to include reference to the targets.

Such consideration should also be made from the outset of any project or policy proposals. Internal consultative bodies who review proposals should provide effective challenge that proposals should be meeting sustainability targets. This is reflected in the strategy.<sup>5</sup> The economic circumstances that the council is operating in are also recognised, and all factors will need to be taken into account.

**A communications plan and behavioural change campaign will be required to ensure residents and businesses engage with the targets and feel part of the solution.**

Adapting to living more sustainability is a challenge for the council and local residents and businesses. To this end, the council has a number of roles including leading by example, enabling more sustainable businesses and initiatives to operate in the borough and as a place-leader. Communications around opportunities, initiatives, ideas and funding could provide a useful resource for residents. Equally important will be listening to views and ideas, providing forums for discussions and ensuring that an effective feedback loop is created.

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<sup>5</sup> Sustainability Strategy, p. 24

## **Bibliography/background papers**

- Report to Overview and Scrutiny Committee – [New Scrutiny Task Group – Sustainability Strategy](#) – 22 June 2022
- Draft Sustainability Strategy
- Deloitte study on lifestyle changes during the pandemic  
<https://www2.deloitte.com/uk/en/pages/press-releases/articles/four-out-of-five-uk-consumers-adopt-more-sustainable-lifestyle-choices-during-covid-19-pandemic.html>
- 2021 ONS census results  
<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/populationandmigration/populationestimates/bulletins/populationandhouseholdestimatesenglandandwales/census2021>
- ONS report on climate anxiety  
<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/wellbeing/articles/threequartersofadultsingreatbritainworryaboutclimatechange/2021-11-05>

The task group would like to thank their witnesses who generously gave time to assist with this review.

**Appendix:  
Watford Borough Council Overview and Scrutiny Committee  
Scrutiny Task Group Scope and Terms of Reference**

<b>Scrutiny review title</b>	Sustainability Strategy
<b>Scrutiny proposer</b>	Cllr Ian Stotesbury, Portfolio Holder for Sustainability
<b>Details of specific area for review</b>	<p>Watford Borough Council has declared a climate emergency in July 2019 and an ecological emergency in January 2021.</p> <p>The current Sustainability Strategy is due to expire in March 2023. Officers are in the process of developing a new strategy to come into effect at that time. An engagement exercise with residents and groups is planned for summer 2022 which will help to shape the incoming strategy.</p> <p>A scrutiny task group is proposed to feed into the development of the new strategy.</p>
<b>Why this has been proposed for review, including the council priorities it supports</b>	<p>The new strategy will be the foundation to the council’s aim to achieve carbon net zero by 2030 and addressing the ecological emergency. The strategy will set out the roadmap to these goals and provide ways of measuring the council’s progress.</p> <p>The strategy will be fundamental in meeting these sustainability ambitions and is an area of priority for the council. It will be a cross-cutting document which sets out how different parts of the council will work with sustainability at the forefront. Member engagement in the process is crucial as they will be part of the delivery of the strategy as well as having roles as ambassadors to residents.</p> <p>It supports the priority of a creative, thriving and diverse town.</p>
<b>Purpose / objectives of the review, including key questions</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To ensure the soundness of the strategy in meeting its aims</li> <li>• To consider whether issues that members consider to be a priority are addressed in the documentation</li> <li>• To review the extent to which consultation feedback has been captured by the strategy</li> <li>• To determine whether any other issues raised in the public consultation should be further addressed in the strategy or by other means.</li> <li>• To secure ownership of the strategy by non-executive councillors and the strengthen residents’ understanding and buy-in</li> <li>• To consider the governance and monitoring of the strategy following implementation.</li> </ul>

<b>Any areas excluded from the scope</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Raw data from consultation</li> <li>• Existing strategies that are linked to the Sustainability Strategy</li> </ul>
<b>Desired outcomes / indicators of success</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• An understanding of the aspirations of the strategy.</li> <li>• Secure support for the roadmap to achieving net zero.</li> <li>• An understanding of the key areas for action under the strategy.</li> <li>• To secure wider ownership of the strategy by non-executive Watford councillors.</li> <li>• To review key aspects of the strategy supported by an understanding of the feedback received in the public consultation and of wider residents' views.</li> <li>• To make recommendations to Cabinet that contribute to the success of the strategy. These recommendations would be based on the consultation feedback and members' wider local understanding.</li> </ul>
<b>Timescale and key dates, including proposed meeting format</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 22 June 2022 - scrutiny proposal to be considered by Overview and Scrutiny Committee</li> <li>• Task group to meet 2 to 3 times between July and October</li> <li>• 16 November or 16 December 2022 (TBC) – draft report to be considered by Overview and Scrutiny Committee</li> <li>• 6 February 2023- Sustainability Strategy to Cabinet</li> </ul>
<b>Key departmental lead officer</b>	Susheel Rao, Sustainability Officer
<b>Witnesses</b>	None directly, feedback will be captured through engagement work
<b>What activities need to be taken to achieve the outcomes</b>	<p>Reviewing draft strategy</p> <p>Reviewing engagement feedback</p> <p>Reviewing examples from best practice</p>
<b>Key policies / documentation / baseline information needed</b>	<p>Draft strategy including outline delivery plan and resourcing</p> <p>Engagement feedback summaries</p> <p>Review of best practice examples</p>
<b>Any other sources of evidence (e.g., site visit)</b>	None
<b>Risks</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Robust strategy required to meet commitment to achieving net zero and proposed route map</li> <li>• Insufficient response to ecological emergency</li> </ul>



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Insufficient engagement with non-executive members and subsequent dissatisfaction with the strategy.</li><li>• Loss of the opportunity to understand residents' views from the wider perspective held by ward councillors</li></ul>
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## Overview and Scrutiny Committee

1 February 2023

- Present: Councillor Osborn (Chair)  
Councillor Ezeifedi (Vice Chair)  
Councillors Ahmed, Allen-Williamson, Jeffree, Kloss, Martins and Turmaine
- Also present: Councillor Hofman (Chair of Sustainability Strategy Task Group)  
Councillor Stotesbury (Portfolio Holder for Transport and Sustainability)
- Officers: Associate Director of Planning, Infrastructure and Economy  
Senior Transport and Infrastructure Project Manger  
Senior Democratic Services Officer

### 64. **Sustainability Strategy Task Group final report**

The scrutiny committee received the final report of the Sustainability Strategy Task Group.

The Senior Democratic Services Officer set out the purpose of the item which was to ensure the recommendations were coherent and as the formal scrutiny committee, it was for Overview and Scrutiny Committee to recommend the report to Cabinet.

The chair of the task group, Councillor Mark Hofman, introduced the report. Setting out the urgency of the issue, he noted that global carbon emissions were at record levels with a 50% chance that an increase of 1.5°C in global temperatures would be exceeded in the next 9 years. The council's existing sustainability strategy expired in March and the task group gave non-executive members a chance to feed in. The report recognised that the targets were challenging and would require coordinated effort to lead the local response which would have a positive impact on thousands of residents.

Responding to a question about the recommendation to increase the target for the percentage of households taking climate actions, the task group chair explained that it was an emergency situation and the census had shown that Watford had a young demography. Numerous studies had demonstrated that younger and more educated people were more likely to engage in climate action. Many older residents were also climate aware. The monitoring of this target would be in the delivery plan and there would be an online platform to record pledges of action.

The Portfolio Holder added that the task group had had lots of good conversations and he fully supported the recommendations. The latest iteration of the report would reflect some of them. He confirmed the delivery plan would come to Overview and Scrutiny Committee as well as the Climate Emergency and Sustainability Forum.

Councillor Ahmed noted that there were a large number of taxis in Watford which contributed to air pollution and asked whether there could be a limitation on taxi vehicles from outside the area as part of the strategy. Declaring an interest, he noted that he was a member of the taxi trade. It was noted that it was not possible to show a preference for different drivers or firms and the discussion would be picked up outside the committee meeting.

Turning to the recommendation around strengthening sustainability considerations in decision-making, the committee noted that the approach to procurement was key to this aim. Further there was an internal board at corporate level to oversee sustainability at the council.

It was further noted that the task group discussed the issues carefully taking into consideration the range of views held by task group members.

Considering the targets further, it was confirmed that the delivery plan would contain more detail on delivery mechanisms and any targets for individual services. The target profile had been built with an external consultancy, confirming the need for off-setting for certain sectors. Noting a comment about interim targets, the Portfolio Holder agreed to take the point away.

RESOLVED –

the final report and recommendations of the Sustainability Strategy Task Group be agreed and forwarded to Cabinet.

# Agenda Item 11

**Report to:** Cabinet

**Date of meeting:** Monday, 13 March 2023

**Report author:** Sustainability Officer

**Title:** **Watford's Environmental Strategy: addressing the climate and ecological emergency 2023-2030: Strategy and Delivery Plan**

## 1.0 Summary

- 1.1 The council declared a climate emergency in 2019 and an ecological emergency in 2021. In March 2020 it approved the Sustainability Strategy pt 1 which runs to March 2023. As such Watford's Environmental Strategy: addressing the climate and ecological emergency 2023-2030 has been developed alongside its associated Delivery Plan.
- 1.2 The Environmental Strategy sets the targets across 4 topics: achieving net zero, nature and ecological restoration, responsible resource use and adapting to change. In addition there are two overarching themes: Leading by example and people power. The delivery plan sets out the actions required between 2023 and 2025 to move us towards achieving those targets.
- 1.3 The draft strategy went out for public consultation from 7<sup>th</sup> November to 9<sup>th</sup> December, and the revised strategy has taken into account the comments raised. Each target was reviewed against the comments received, and adapted if appropriate. In addition, the governance section was made clearer and how we would consult with stakeholders during the timeframe of the strategy was clarified.
- 1.4 Attached as appendices as designed documents are:
  - Watford's Environment Environmental Strategy: addressing the climate and ecological emergency – 2023-2030
  - Watford's Environment Environmental Strategy: addressing the climate and ecological emergency – 2023-2030 - Summary
  - Watford's Environment Environmental Strategy: addressing the climate and ecological emergency – Delivery Plan 2023-2025
- 1.5 There are both financial and staff resource implications in taking forward the delivery plan, and in meeting the targets of the strategy by 2030. External funding will be required to achieve this, along with collaboration with stakeholders in the borough. There are also risks in not taking forward this strategy.

1.6 By taking forward an effective strategy and delivery plan the council is meeting its commitment to addressing the climate and ecological emergency.

1.7 It is recommended that the strategy and delivery plan are approved.

## 2.0 Risks

### 2.1

Nature of risk	Consequence	Suggested control measure	Response (treat, tolerate, terminate, transfer)	Risk rating (combination of severity and likelihood)
<i>Reputational risk in not delivering the actions</i>	<i>Negative media reporting. Erosion of trust.</i>	<i>Implement delivery plan. Ensure robust reporting and review.</i>	<i>Treat</i>	<i>2 x 2 = 4</i>
<i>Reputational risk in not seen to be addressing climate and ecological emergency effectively</i>	<i>Negative media reporting. Negative interactions with interested parties</i>	<i>Engage with stakeholders through critical friends' panel.</i>	<i>Treat</i>	<i>3 x 2 = 6</i>
<i>Insufficient resources for delivering the plan</i>	<i>Actions in the plan not delivered. Staff disillusionment</i>	<i>Ensure sufficient resources. Ensure priority for council</i>	<i>Tolerate</i>	<i>2 x 3 = 6</i>
<i>Impact of financial constraints on delivering the plan</i>	<i>Actions in plan not delivered. Negative media reporting. Erosion of trust. Staff disillusionment</i>	<i>Ring fence available resources. Explore funding opportunities throughout plan. Lobby government for funding</i>	<i>Tolerate</i>	<i>2 x 3 = 6</i>

## 3.0 Recommendations

3.1 That Watford's Environmental Strategy: addressing the climate and ecological emergency 2023-2030 full document and summary document attached as appendices 1 and 2 be approved.

- 3.2 That Watford's Environmental Strategy: addressing the climate and ecological emergency – Delivery Plan 2023-2025 attached as appendix 3 be approved.
- 3.3 That authority for the allocation of the Sustainability Reserve be delegated to the Director for Partnerships in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Transport and Sustainability.

**Further information:**

Susheel Rao  
susheel.rao@watford.gov.uk

**Report approved by:**

Alan Gough  
Director of Partnerships  
Alan.gough@watford.gov.uk

**4.0 Detailed proposal**

**4.1 Background**

- 4.1.1 The council declared a climate emergency in July 2019, and declared an ecological emergency in January 2021. The council produced its sustainability strategy in 2020 – Sustainability Strategy 2020 to 2023; Road to net zero part 1. Associated with the strategy is an Action Plan, actions within which are being progressed.
- 4.1.2 In November 2022 the Climate Change and Ecological Emergency Strategy went out to consultation. Following the consultation, the results were reviewed and informed the final strategy. This included reviewing and updating the targets and renaming the strategy to Watford's Environmental Strategy: addressing the climate and ecological emergency.
- 4.1.3 The strategy has approximately 55 targets within it and it runs from 2023 to 2030. To enable more frequent review of actions, the strategy sets out the targets, and a separate delivery plan sets out the actions to be taken over a 2 year period. The Strategy is attached as appendix 1.

**4.2 Strategy Consultation**

- 4.2.1 The consultation ran from 7<sup>th</sup> November to 9<sup>th</sup> December and received the following responses:
- 357 responses on CommonPlace

- 238 people engaged with through focus group meetings and face to face meetings
- 79 responses on Snap Survey.

4.2.2 Overall, the responses were generally positive, with greater engagement in some areas of the strategy:

- Nature and ecological restoration received the greatest amount of positive comments
- The overview section and net zero carbon section received the greatest amount of responses
- Governance received the least amount of responses, with adapting to change and resource use also low.

4.2.3 Other key points which came out of the consultation are:

- The targets need to be reviewed to ensure that all targets are SMART;
- It would be helpful to have interim targets for more areas;
- We need to ensure that businesses are engaged, and that they are referenced throughout the strategy;
- To successfully implement this, we will need effective engagement and education;
- It would be beneficial to have some form of ongoing consultation, with the suggestion of a small 'critical friend's panel' or similar made up of 8-15 people with a good representation of the Borough.

### **4.3 Changes resulting from the consultation**

4.3.1 There were 3 areas where changes were made following the consultation: the name; reviewing each target against comments, and making appropriate changes; and updating the text in the governance section to ensure it set out clearly our intentions.

4.3.2 Following discussion with the Mayor, the name of the strategy was changed to:

Watford's Environmental Strategy: addressing the climate and ecological emergency.

4.3.3 A summary version of the strategy has also been produced, which sets out the targets across the themes and topics appendix 2.

4.3.4 The strategy also sets out how engagement with stakeholders will continue, both through existing forums such as the Sustainability Forum, and through a new climate critical friends' panel made up of 8-15 representative members.

### **4.4 The Delivery Plan**

4.4.2 The delivery plan runs from April 2023 to March 2025, and will be reviewed annually. Every 2 years a new delivery plan will be developed, taking into account how the Council is progressing to meet its targets. The delivery plan is attached as appendix 3

4.4.2 Progress on actions will be reviewed and reported as part of the council's governance structure, as well as there being an annual report on emissions, resource usage and impact on the environment. The strategy sets out what is likely to be included in this.

4.4.3 Much of what is in the current delivery plan is already part of the service plans across the council. The intention is to embed the targets of the Environmental Strategy across the council, and therefore it is anticipated that future delivery plans will also contain much that is in service plans, and that those developing service plans will be mindful of the requirements of the Environmental Strategy.

4.4.4 There are cost implications to delivering the Delivery Plan, and delivering the strategy as a whole. As part of the work developing the strategy, the council commissioned APSE to develop a route to net zero. They estimated for the council to achieve net zero in its own buildings (excluding the Town Hall) the cost would be in the region of £5m and to achieve net zero for its leased assets would require an additional £12m. Therefore to achieve net zero, and to achieve our wider climate change and ecological emergency targets will require additional external funding.

4.4.4 The cost implications for the 2023-2025 delivery plan, excluding what is currently in agreed service plans is estimated to be £440k. This includes costing for fixed term staff resources for the duration of the delivery plan of 1 day/week of programme management support and continuing the role of assistant sustainability officer until the end of the delivery plan term.

## 5.0 **Implications**

### 5.1 **Financial**

5.1.1 The Shared Director of Finance comments that Council agreed to create the Sustainability Reserve of £500k in January 2022. This reserve will be utilised to support the delivery of the action plan.

### 5.2 **Legal Issues (Monitoring Officer)**



5.2.1 The Group Head of Democracy and Governance comments that the Strategy and Delivery Plan follow on from the council's declarations of the climate and ecological emergencies in 2019 and 2021.

### 5.3 Equalities, Human Rights and Data Protection

5.3.1 As this is a new strategy an equalities impact analysis has been undertaken. The analysis is attached as Appendix 4 to this report. The main conclusions of that analysis are:

- Implementing the strategy should have a long term benefit to all, especially the disadvantaged and those on low income as it will help to:
  - mitigate against energy and resource cost rises;
  - reduce pollution and congestion;
  - provide access to nature as well as green space;
  - prepare the borough for changes resulting for climate change.
- The potential negative impacts relate to costs of implementing changes, whether for individuals, within the council or within the borough. Other negative impacts relate to perceptions that some things are now off limits, without an alternative.

5.3.2 Overall, the strategy will have a positive impact both in the short and the longer term.

5.3.3 There are no human rights implications.

5.3.4 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 To implement the Delivery Plan 2023-2025 effectively there will be both training and staff resources required. One action is mandatory training for all staff, which has been discussed with HR. Other actions may require some training. As it is intended to embed the Environmental Strategy across the Council, there will be some staff resource requirements across all service areas.

5.4.2 Additional resource to the Sustainability team is required, with a cost as described in the financial section. The resource would be:

- 1 day per week programme manager – April 2023- Mar 2025
- Extension of Assistant Sustainability role – Nov 2023 – Mar 2025

5.4.3 In the financial costing, there has also been inclusion for communication and engagement support, including support for 2 days / week for at least 1 year.

## 5.5 **Accommodation**

5.5.1 There is no additional accommodation requirements anticipated at this time, beyond meeting rooms.

5.5.2 However, the Environmental Strategy Delivery Plan 2023-25 has implications for council owned property in the following ways:

- Moving to net zero carbon emissions will require decarbonisation of property assets.
- Maintenance and replacement regimes need to take into account the net zero requirements, such that low energy or resource options are used when replacing fixtures and fittings; also maintenance approaches will need to take into account their energy and resource implications.

## 5.6 **Community Safety/Crime and Disorder**

5.6.1 It is not anticipated that this strategy will have a negative impact on community safety or on crime and disorder.

## 5.7 **Sustainability**

5.7.1 The delivery plan sets out how we will meet our targets for 2025 set out in the Environmental Strategy: addressing the climate and ecological emergency 2023-2030. The Strategy addresses 4 sustainability topics: achieving net zero, nature and ecological restoration, responsible resource use and adapting to change.

5.5.2 To create a resilient future, we need to ensure we are working within the planetary boundaries, while maintaining a thriving Watford. To move towards this we need to address the following issues, moving towards having a positive or neutral impact in each area. The issues are:

- Greenhouse gas emissions;
- Biodiversity;
- Land use;
- Renewable energy / effective offsetting;
- Soil and waterway (including oceans) health;

- Water resources;
- Pollution;
- Material resource use;
- Climate change and adaptation.

5.5.3 The Environmental Strategy and delivery plan address all the above issues, and if implemented it is anticipated would have a positive effect on them overall.

### **Appendices**

- Watford's Environment Environmental Strategy: addressing the climate and ecological emergency – 2023-2030
- Watford's Environment Environmental Strategy: addressing the climate and ecological emergency – 2023-2030 - Summary
- Watford's Environment Environmental Strategy: addressing the climate and ecological emergency – Delivery Plan 2023-2025
- EqIA report

### **Background papers**

No papers were used in the preparation of this report.



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# Foreword

There are few challenges more important than the climate and ecological emergency. It is already affecting communities across the world and in the future will have high impacts on our local economy, local families and local wildlife. We've seen in Watford the profound effects of extended droughts followed by extensive rainfall, and the challenges of invasive species on our local biodiversity.

Councils can play a critical role in creating low-carbon and climate resilient communities and also play a leadership role in creating lasting and effective partnership with residents, community organisations and businesses. Together we can tackle the big issues facing Watford.

The Environmental Strategy builds on the work being done across the Council following the declaration of a climate and ecological emergency. We want to see Watford Borough Council achieve net zero carbon emissions in all its direct emissions by 2030, and see a net zero town, with the benefits of lower congestion, radically improved biodiversity and tree cover.

Our mission will require all sectors of our community to play their part as we address the climate and ecological emergency and move towards net zero. Together we can create a more sustainable future.



**Peter Taylor**  
Elected Mayor of Watford



**Councillor  
Ian Stotesbury**



# Introduction

We are facing a climate and ecological emergency. This is not something that may happen in the future, but something that is happening right now. We are reaching and crossing what are known as planetary boundaries: boundaries beyond which we may see non-linear, abrupt environmental change<sup>1</sup>. The safe space that we humans are used to living in is in jeopardy. We can all see the changes happening globally: we've seen droughts, wildfires, heatwaves and hurricanes; locally - more torrential rain, floods, changes in the seasons and dangerous heatwaves.

Since pre-industrial times we have seen an average temperature rise of over 1°C globally and higher temperature changes within the UK. At COP21<sup>2</sup>, governments committed to ensuring that the temperature rise remains below 2°C and ideally below 1.5°C compared to pre-industrial levels. This was again committed to at COP26<sup>3</sup>. This target is tough, but still achievable, although it is unlikely the peak temperature rise will remain below 1.5°C.

**The longer we leave it, the tougher and more expensive it gets.**



## UK temperature change

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.ecologyandsociety.org/vol14/iss2/art32/>

<sup>2</sup> <https://unfccc.int/process-and-meetings/the-paris-agreement/the-paris-agreement>

<sup>3</sup> <https://ukcop26.org/>; <https://unfccc.int/process-and-meetings/the-paris-agreement/the-glasgow-climate-pact-key-outcomes-from-cop26>

# State of the UK Climate 2021

The UK's climate is continuing to change. Recent decades have been warmer, wetter and sunnier than the 20th century.

All the UK's top 10 warmest years, in the series from 1884, have occurred this century.

In 2021 specifically, UK temperatures and sunshine were near to the 1991-2020 average although rainfall was slightly below.

Here, we take a broader look at how key climate variables in the most recent decade (2012-2021) compare to averages over the last 60 years

2012-2021: A reflection of the UK shifting climate

**Sunshine**  
2012-2021 was 2% sunnier than 1991-2020 and 8% sunnier than 1961-1990

**Temperatures**  
The most recent decade (2012-2021) was 0.2°C warmer than 1991-2020, and 1.6 warmer than 1961-1990

**Rainfall**  
The most recent decade was 2% wetter than 1991-2020 and 10% wetter than 1961-1990

**Growing degree days\***  
The number of growing degree days increased by 2% since 1991-2020 and by 17% since 1961-1990

**Near-coast sea surface temperature**  
Sea surface temperature near the UK coast increased by 0.1°C since 1991-2020 and by 0.7°C since 1961-1990

**Heating degree days'**  
Heating degree days have decreased by 2% since 1991-2020 and by 11% since 1961-1990

**Cooling degree days\***  
There were 16 cooling degree days for the most recent decade compared to an average of 14 for 1991-2020 and 9 for 1961-1990

**Air and ground frosts**  
In the most recent decade there were 5% fewer air and ground frost days than 1991-2020 and a decline of 21% (air) and 18% (ground) frost days since 1961-1990

\*Degree days are indicators of requirements for heating or cooling of buildings or conditions suitable for plant growth.



At a local level, according to the BBC's climate change site<sup>5</sup>, a global temperature rise of 2°C could mean we see more frequent hottest temperatures of 38°C, and rainfall on a single summer day go from 36mm to 53mm. For a rise of 4°C, hottest temperatures could exceed 42°C. Our current global emissions trend suggests we will gain an annual average global temperature rise of around 3°C. This is truly uncharted territory.

We are moving from climate change to climate chaos: unprecedented average temperature rises with potentially unforeseen consequences. Indeed, the negative impacts of climate change are mounting much faster than scientists predicted less than a decade ago, according to the latest report from a United Nations climate panel<sup>6</sup>, and demonstrated by the 2022 UK temperature record exceeding 40°C, which, in 2020, the Met Office suggested as a potential scenario for 2050<sup>7</sup>.

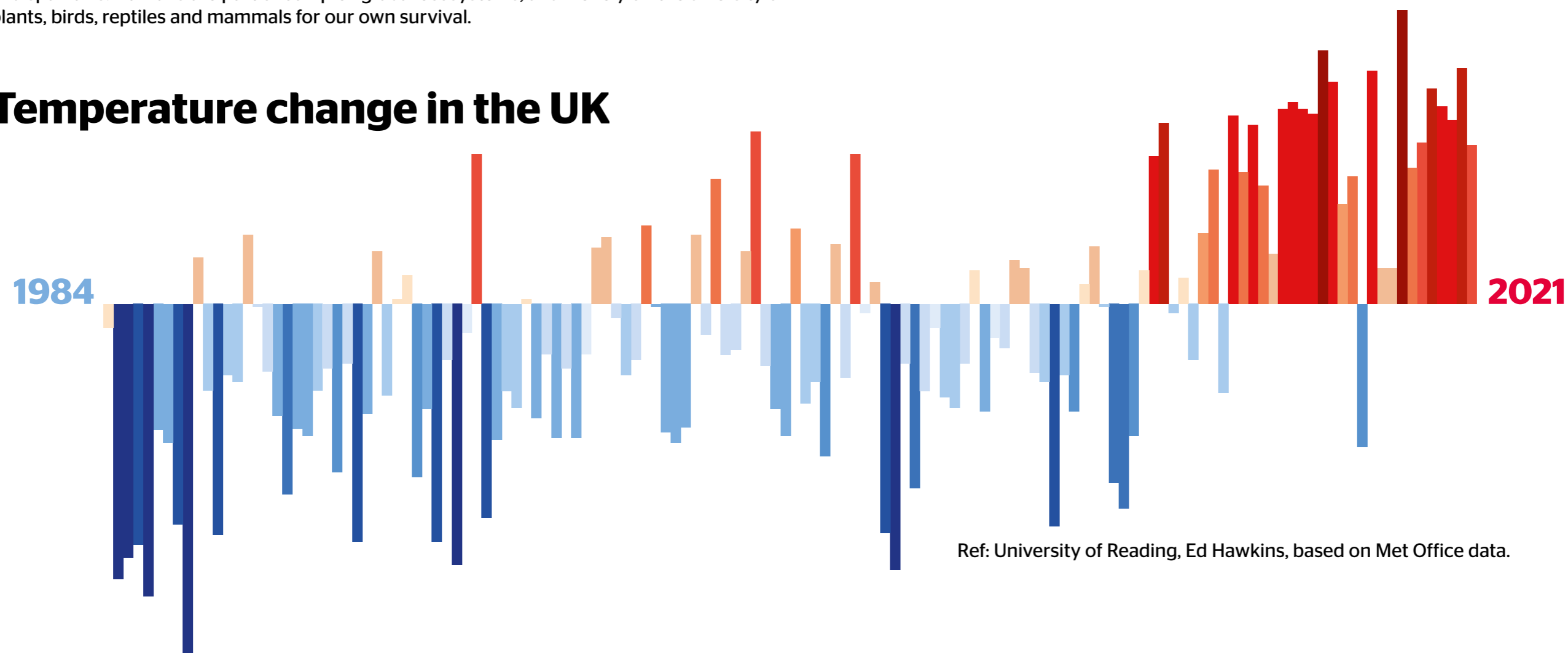
Scientists are saying we are moving into the 6th mass extinction: - primarily caused by humans, not just through climate change, but also habitat destruction and farming practices<sup>8</sup>. There is potential for ecosystem collapse on a global scale. In the UK, many animals once thought of as common are now on the endangered list, such as hedgehogs, bees, dormice and sparrows. Humans are part of complex global ecosystems, and we rely on the diversity of plants, birds, reptiles and mammals for our own survival.

**There is still hope** - with concerted effort, leadership and co-operation, we can limit our greenhouse gas emissions and provide space for nature, allowing it to recover and regenerate. We must start thinking about our place in the world in a different way, working with and within nature as part of a global system, acting with respect and reciprocity. The earth is not a commodity but our home, and it's the only one we've got.

**The time to act is now** - we still have a window of opportunity. Our clock for preventing climate catastrophe may no longer be at '5 minutes to midnight' but rather '5 minutes past', but there is still much we can do.

**The longer we wait, the harder it will be, and the greater the financial, human and ecological cost.**

## Temperature change in the UK



<sup>4</sup> <https://www.metoffice.gov.uk/research/climate/maps-and-data/about/state-of-climate>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/resources/idt-d6338d9f-8789-4bc2-b6d7-3691c0e7d138> based on Met Office data

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.nature.com/articles/d41586-022-00585-7>; <https://www.ipcc.ch/report/sixth-assessment-report-working-group-ii/>

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.metoffice.gov.uk/services/insights/future-weather-forecast-for-2050>

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.worldwildlife.org/stories/what-is-the-sixth-mass-extinction-and-what-can-we-do-about-it#:~:text=What's%20causing%20the%20sixth%20mass,energy%20use%2C%20and%20climate%20change>

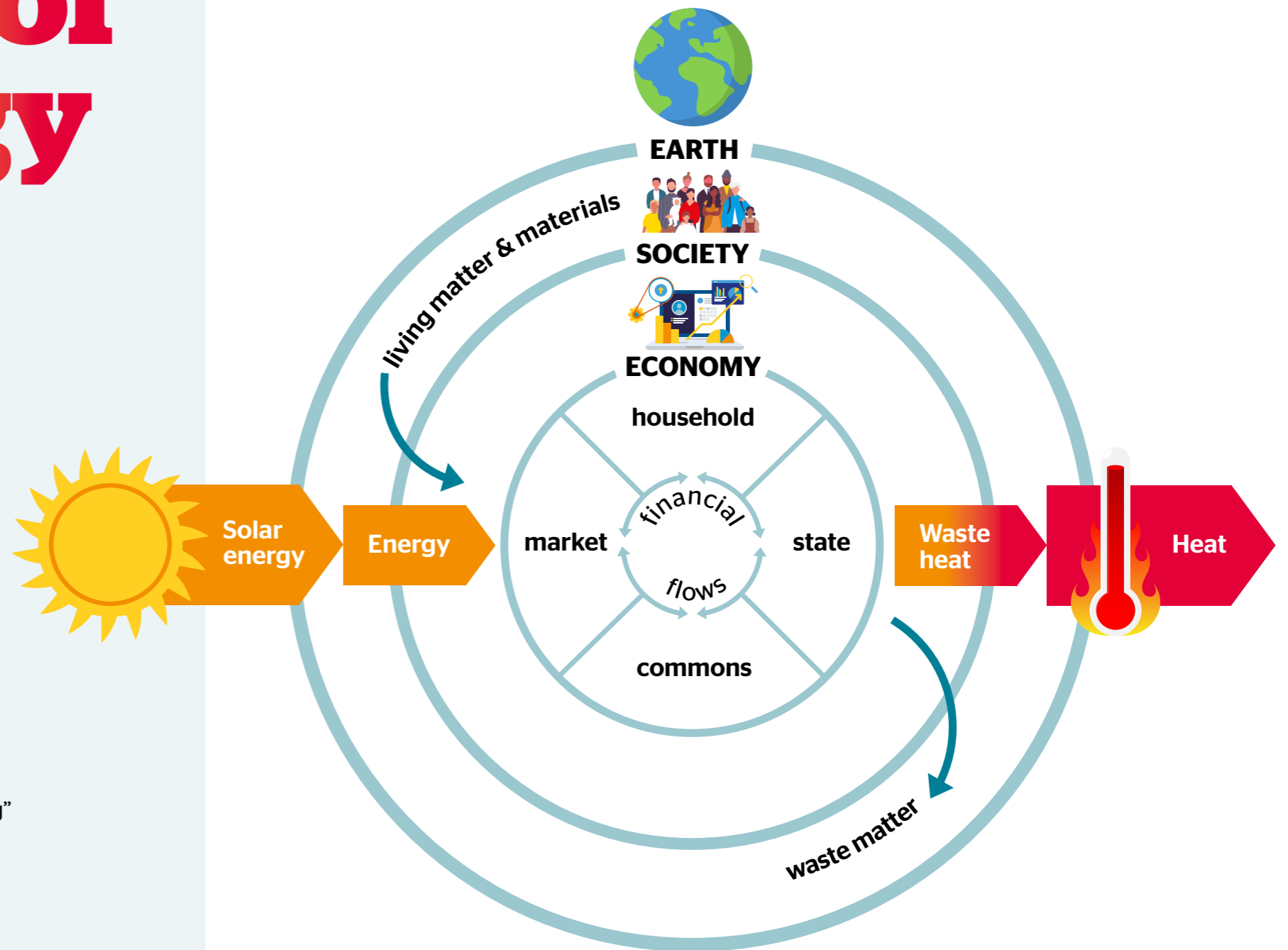


# Overview of the strategy

This strategy sets Watford Borough Council's approach for addressing the climate and ecological emergency, achieving net carbon (equivalent) zero (CO<sub>2e</sub>) by 2030 and how we are going to measure and report on progress. This strategy also addresses adaptive and regenerative issues, to help create a thriving and resilient place.

The climate and ecological emergency are cross cutting issues which affect all aspects of the Council's operations, as well as all aspects of people's lives within the borough. We will seek to embed these issues into all our operations. It is also important to remember that the borough is not an island, and we will not be working in isolation. This strategy and associated 2 year delivery plans will link with work within Hertfordshire (HCCSP<sup>9</sup>), regionally and nationally.

So what are we aiming for? In simple terms, a resilient and thriving society living within planetary boundaries, creating a safe space for humans to live. Our society needs to be resilient so that we can adapt to abrupt changes with minimum negative impact. "Thriving" means that no one lives below healthy living standards. To create a thriving and resilient society, our approach to the environment must be regenerative, as we have already passed beyond the planet's reasonable limits and need to redress the balance.



## Towards sustainability

For a thriving, sustainable and resilient place, the economy needs to nest within society, which itself nests within the living world; whilst recognising the diverse ways the economy and society will meet people's needs and wants<sup>10</sup>.

<sup>9</sup> Hertfordshire Climate Change and Sustainability Panel: <https://www.eastherts.gov.uk/hertfordshire-climate-change-and-sustainability-partnership-hccsp>

<sup>10</sup> Doughnut economics, Kate Raworth, 2017

# Approach

This strategy sets out 2 overarching themes - leading by example, and people power; and 4 sustainability topics:

## Overarching themes:



Leading by example



People power

## Sustainability topics:



Achieving net zero



Nature and ecological restoration



Responsible resource use



Adapting to change

For each of the four sustainability topics, the strategy will set out what the key issues are, what the Council can do through leading by example, and what needs to be achieved by people power within the borough.

The intention of the strategy is to build on the wider Council Plan and be the umbrella document in the context of the climate and ecological emergency. It does not seek to repeat detail, rather to reference them within the context of our approach and overarching targets.

# Our key overarching targets are:

## Leading by example



Council's own carbon emissions (CO<sub>2e</sub>) to be net zero carbon by the end of 2030



Council's own waste reduced to near zero by 2030



30% by area of our green spaces managed to support nature by 2030

## People power



Do everything in our power to achieve net zero carbon emissions (CO<sub>2e</sub>) for the borough by the end of 2030



Do everything in our power to reduce waste by 50% by 2030, with recycling making up at least 60% of the waste<sup>11</sup>

<sup>11</sup> <https://www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/media-library/documents/waste/spatial-strategy/collected-waste-spatial-strategy-2021.pdf>

# Leading by example

To achieve the Council's objectives requires working across the Council and beyond. To enable, facilitate and inspire others, the Council will lead by example, both in its approach to addressing the climate and ecological emergency, and also in its approach to working with others.

## The Council Plan for 2022 - 2026 has 4 themes, two of which are relevant to this strategy:

**Theme 1:** A high performing council which serves its residents with one relevant commitment.

- Become a greener, more sustainable council.

**Theme 2:** A greener, brighter future.

### With four commitments:



- Encourage people to make greener travel choices, reducing congestion and improving the health and wellbeing of the town



- Promote improvements to the town's biodiversity to enhance the range of habitats, plants and wildlife in the town



- Work alongside our community and businesses to find the best ways to reach net zero carbon, seeking not just to learn from others but to explore innovative solutions that will work for Watford



- Encourage residents and businesses to recycle more, reusing materials and reducing waste and what they throw away

Across all the environmental strategy topics, the Council will work to ensure its own activities meet the targets set out, and that its own decision making approach effectively addresses the cross-discipline, environmental challenges. It will ensure that its officers and members understand the issues, imperatives and opportunities surrounding the climate and ecological emergency, and for officers to understand how to implement its practices effectively in their work, and encourage both officers and members to make changes in their home too.

The Council will also demonstrate its commitment and performance through its governance and reporting approach on net zero carbon, biodiversity and other key measures for a thriving Watford.

It will also ensure that its procurement process and investment portfolio approach meet our climate and ecological commitments. It will also embed environmental requirements into new and updated strategies, plans and grants.

In addition to the work it is doing internally, the Council will work with other organisations to support them and the borough in becoming net zero carbon and addressing the climate and ecological emergency; through lobbying government, collaborative working, promoting good practice and signposting people.

## Targets

- To meet the Council Plan's Greener, Brighter Future commitments by 2026
- Ensure that the Council is a leader in co-ordinating with stakeholders across the borough to address the climate and ecological emergency
- Environmental strategy targets and associated actions embedded in all council strategies and plans as they are developed or reviewed, or by 2030 at the latest
- Councillors and all staff trained on the strategy and its impacts, climate change and the ecological emergency by 2024, and ongoing annual or biennial thereafter
- Ensure the Council lobbies regionally and nationally to improve the ability of Watford, and the UK to meet their environmental targets
- Annual reporting of key targets from 2024
- Regular review of the procurement strategy 2022 - 2026
- Ensure ESG remains a key consideration in where we invest
- Property investments (excluding FRI leases extending beyond 2030) to have EPC rating of B or higher by 2030
- ESG/Environmental impacts to be a key consideration in all new JV and own projects by 2025

# People power

We all have our part to play, and we all have opportunities to do so. In meeting this imperative, we also seek to enable people to be happy and healthy, and to thrive. We want to provide the means for Watford residents, businesses and community groups to create resilient lifestyles, within the living world's boundaries. Throughout the document, there are some targets which are not within the Council's ability to deliver, but will instead be encouraged and facilitated by the Council wherever possible. These are the targets that fall under Borough or People Power. To achieve the necessary changes we will need engagement and action from everyone across the borough including residents, businesses, other organisations, community groups and visitors.

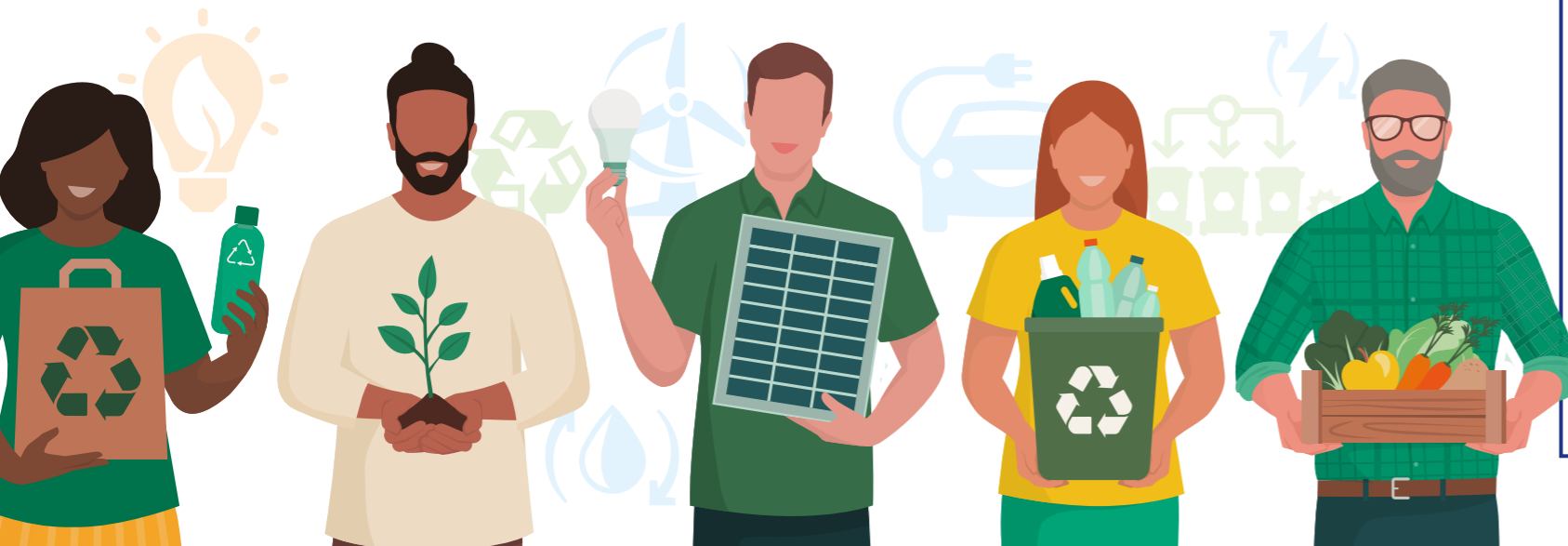
We will work with local residents, businesses and communities to support them in transitioning to a low carbon lifestyle. This includes engaging with people to understand what their barriers are, what is important to them, and what opportunities we have to facilitate change, as well as opportunities to provide education and information resources.

As part of this strategy we will develop an ongoing engagement plan, which will include regular, varied and effective communication, and will engage and assist our community in reducing our emissions and other environmental impacts, where we can, while remaining happy, healthy and thriving.

Part of people power is about seeking change from others, including central government, and also from business and finance. It requires others, as well as the council, to lobby and make their voices heard. To achieve net zero carbon, and a holistic approach to how we live, we will need significant change, not least to ensure that those most vulnerable do not fall through the cracks.

## Skills and green jobs

To deliver the change we require, we need to build people's skills and knowledge, ensuring that there is appropriate training for the new skills required. We must create a space and a skilled workforce that allows green businesses to thrive in Watford. We are working with partners to develop a skills and employment plan, where green jobs and skills are a key strand.



## Climate justice

As climate change will affect different people and places unevenly, it is likely to create inequalities, and may disproportionately affect those who did the least damage to the climate in the first place.

Climate justice means sharing the benefits and burdens associated with climate stabilisation equitably, and stems from a "polluter pays" approach. It is also about ensuring those who suffer most from the impacts of climate change are protected by those who most created the problem.

The Council will work with those in the borough, as well as regionally and nationally, to ensure those most disadvantaged can access help and support in mitigating for and adapting to climate change.

## People Power across the strategy:

Throughout the rest of the strategy, to achieve the borough targets, action by others such as businesses, public sector organisations, individuals and community groups will be needed. Each of the four sustainability topics following includes targets for the borough: people power and for the council: leading by example.

### Targets

- 10% of Watford Households signed up to Count Us In or equivalent by 2025; 25% by 2027; 50% by 2030
- Engage with 50% of fuel poor households on how they can reduce their energy costs by 2025; 75% by 2027 and 90% by 2030
- 50% SME and large businesses signed up to sustainable business charter by March 2025; 75% by March 2027
- 25% micro businesses signed up to sustainable business pledge - March 2025; 50% by March 2027
- Increase uptake of local climate initiatives by 10% year on year from 2024 to 2030
- Increase by at least 10% year on year opportunities for people to be engaged with educational or voluntary activities in this area
- Develop a skills and employment plan, with green skills and jobs as a key strand by 2024, implementing the targets and actions thereafter

Watford Borough Council has committed to achieving net zero carbon by 2030 for its own operations, and will do everything in its power to enable the Borough to achieve net zero carbon by 2030.

Net zero carbon means that we will measure and reduce the greenhouse gases (GHGs) emitted through our operations and activities (both direct and indirect), and then, for those emissions which can't be eliminated, offset to achieve net zero.

Key greenhouse gases are carbon dioxide, methane, and nitrous oxide. There are a number of other greenhouse gases, such as refrigerants (Hydro chloro fluoro carbons HCHCs), some of which can be very potent. [see graphic] These will not be included in our calculations but we will seek to ensure that these GHGs are identified if we use or emit them, and eliminated or reduced and offset. Care will also be taken to ensure that any refrigerants are safely disposed of.

Current UK Government targets are:

- 68% reduction by 2030 based on 1990 levels
- 78% reduction by 2035 based on 1990 levels
- Net zero by 2050

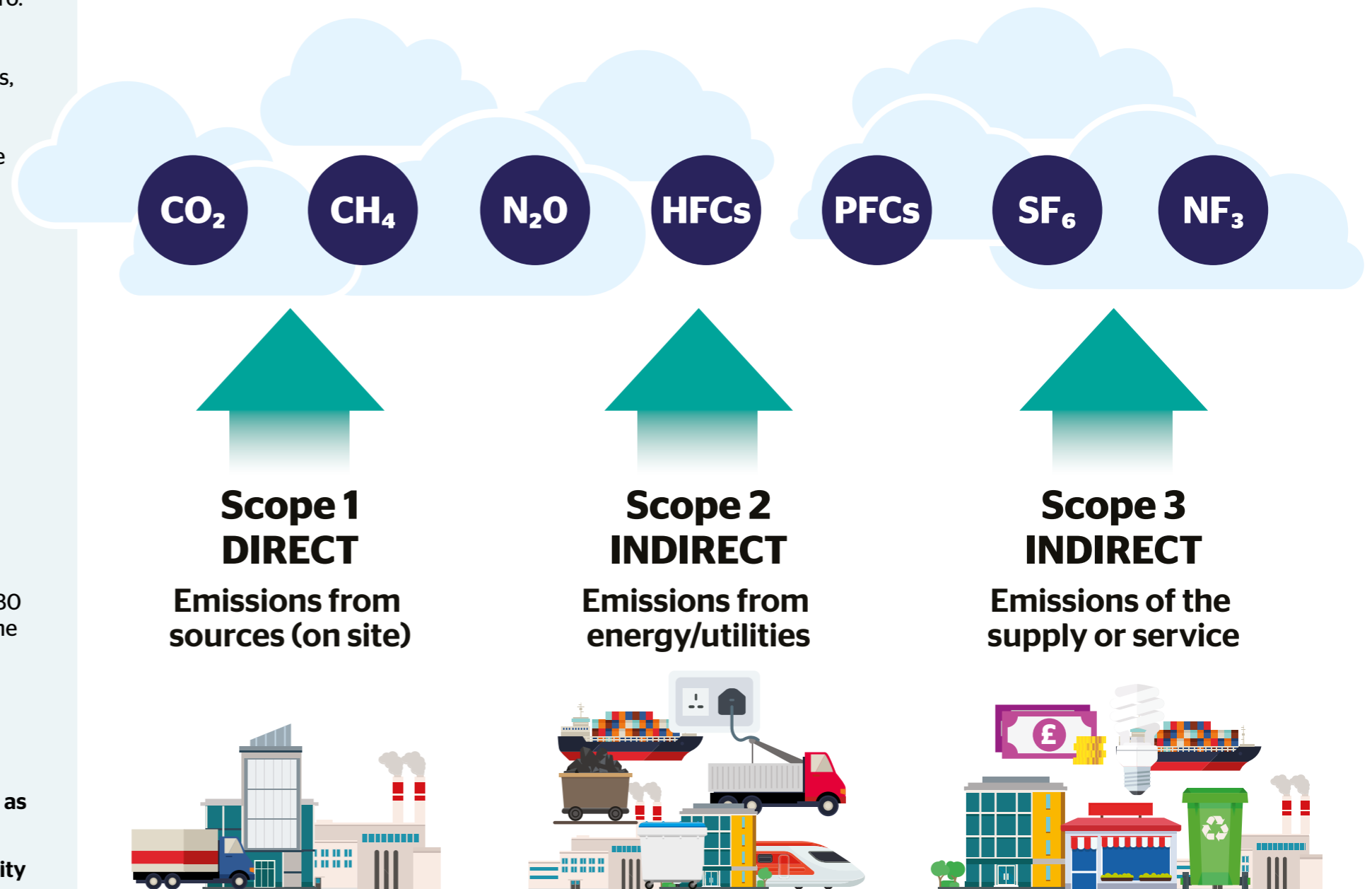
## The Council - Leading by example

The Council's baseline energy emissions for 2019 - 20 are 1980 tonnes CO<sub>2e</sub>. This does not include staff commuting and home working energy emissions, or broader scope 3 emissions, which we will also be seeking to reduce.

The Council's operations emit greenhouse gases in the following ways:

- Direct energy consumption, e.g. through heating (known as scope 1)
- Indirect energy consumption, e.g. through use of electricity (known as scope 2)
- Other indirect energy use - known as scope 3 - e.g. business travel and contracted out services
- Indirect to be included as soon as possible, and to be accounted for separately - staff travel to and from work, staff energy use for working from home
- Indirect from supply chain - this will be reviewed within the first year of the strategy and implemented from year 2

# Achieving net zero



**Carbon reduction within the Council will be achieved as follows:**

- Each year a carbon budget will be set for the Council and each service will be clear on the implications for that service
- Carbon emissions will be measured and reported annually
- Support and resources will be made available to enable the Council to reduce its emissions and therefore meet the carbon budget. The carbon budget will be for direct energy use, indirect energy use, outsourced provision of services, purchases (to be agreed and defined) and business travel. It will not include staff commuting and home working energy, although those will be recorded and addressed separately
- More efficient use of resources
- Renewable energy and low energy technologies will be installed, making use of private wire systems where appropriate
- Electricity will be purchased on 100% renewable tariff. The Council will look to switch to low carbon, non-fossil fuel primary energy solutions
- The Council will seek to offset GHG emissions within the UK, using recognised and accredited providers. It will also ensure that its own tree planting can be recognised as carbon offsetting

As part of the Council’s commitment to net zero carbon emissions, all future property and other investments will need to consider the net zero carbon emission target, and existing property investments (where Watford Borough Council have a direct relationship with an occupying tenant) will be reviewed to see how our investment portfolio could contribute to the net zero carbon 2030 target. Investments need to be regenerative and generous (to the environment and to our society), while also being sufficient in terms of performance, returns, etc.

**Targets**

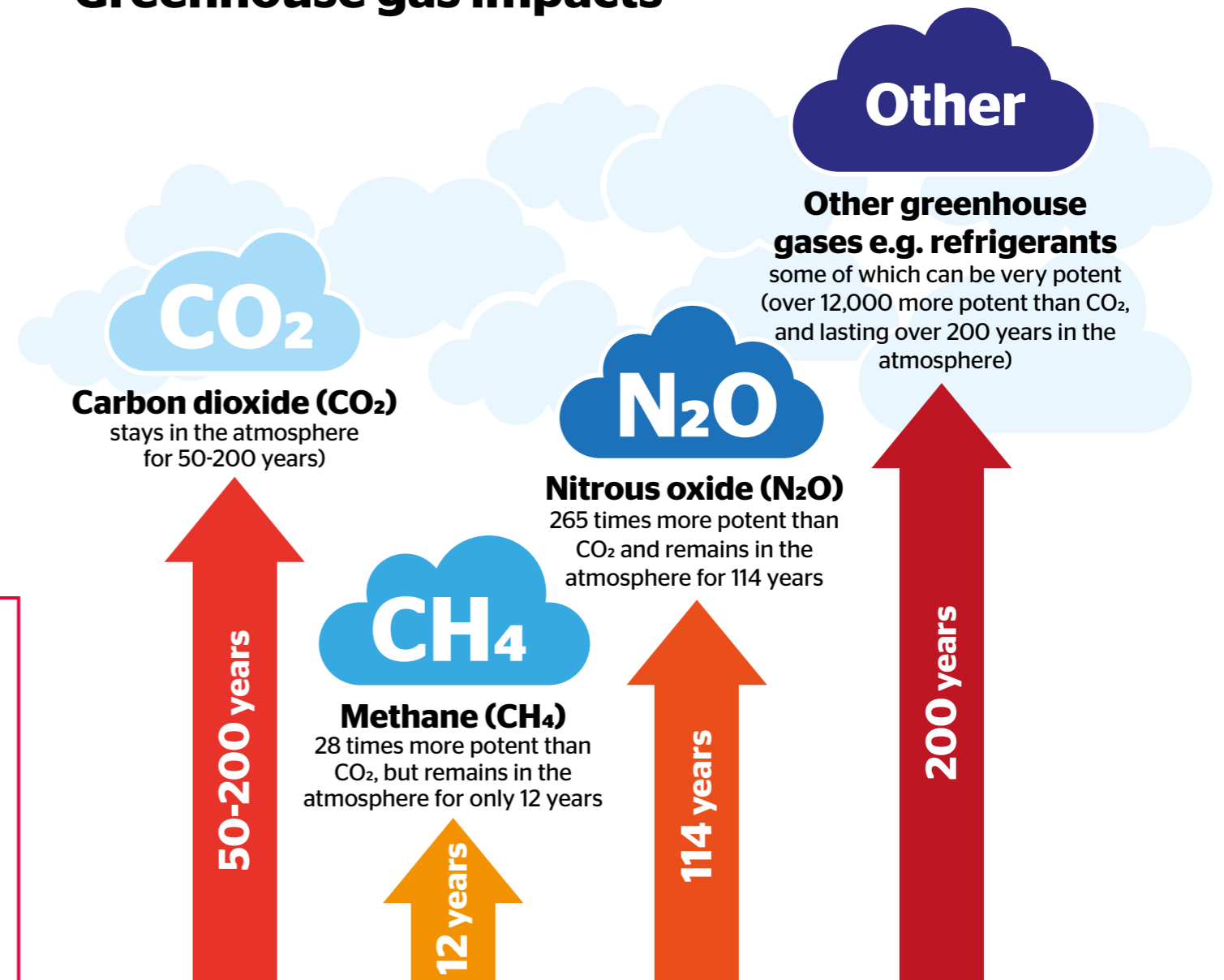
To achieve net zero by 2030 for the Council emissions it is proposed to have a stepped increase in emissions reduction

Year	Percentage reduction %	Percentage offsetting %	Total %
2025	22	6	28
2027	40	11	51
2029	60	19	79
2030	75	25	100

The offset will be achieved through tree planting and solar photovoltaic energy generation. Offsetting planning and implementation will begin from the start of the strategy, to both ensure we have sufficient in place by 2030 and to begin to mitigate carbon emissions, even while we are still reducing them.

The trajectory and practical savings have been developed through a third party study.

**Greenhouse gas impacts**



## Borough - people power

Baseline data for the borough has been taken from the ScatterCities tool, which is based on the BEIS (Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy) data. This baseline data is from 2019; the most up-to-date information available. Note: data is usually only available for Borough emissions from 2 years earlier, which has implications in how we measure the impacts of initiatives within the borough. The current use in Watford is 486.739 kilo (k) tonnes CO<sub>2e</sub>; broken down as shown in the borough CO<sub>2e</sub> emissions by sector chart.

Using similar data, The Tyndall Centre has established the carbon budget that can be fairly allocated to Watford to globally achieve less than a 2°C of warming by 2100, and the amount that therefore can be consumed in the borough between 2020 and 2100<sup>12</sup>. They calculate this to be 2.4 Mega tonnes (Mt) CO<sub>2</sub>, and recommend a 12.5% year on year reduction of emissions, to achieve zero or near zero emissions by 2043. At 2043 5% of the budget remains. This does not include shipping or aviation emissions.

To achieve net zero by 2030 for the Borough emissions, significant actions will be required by everyone, including residents, businesses and visitors to Watford, as well as significant offsetting.

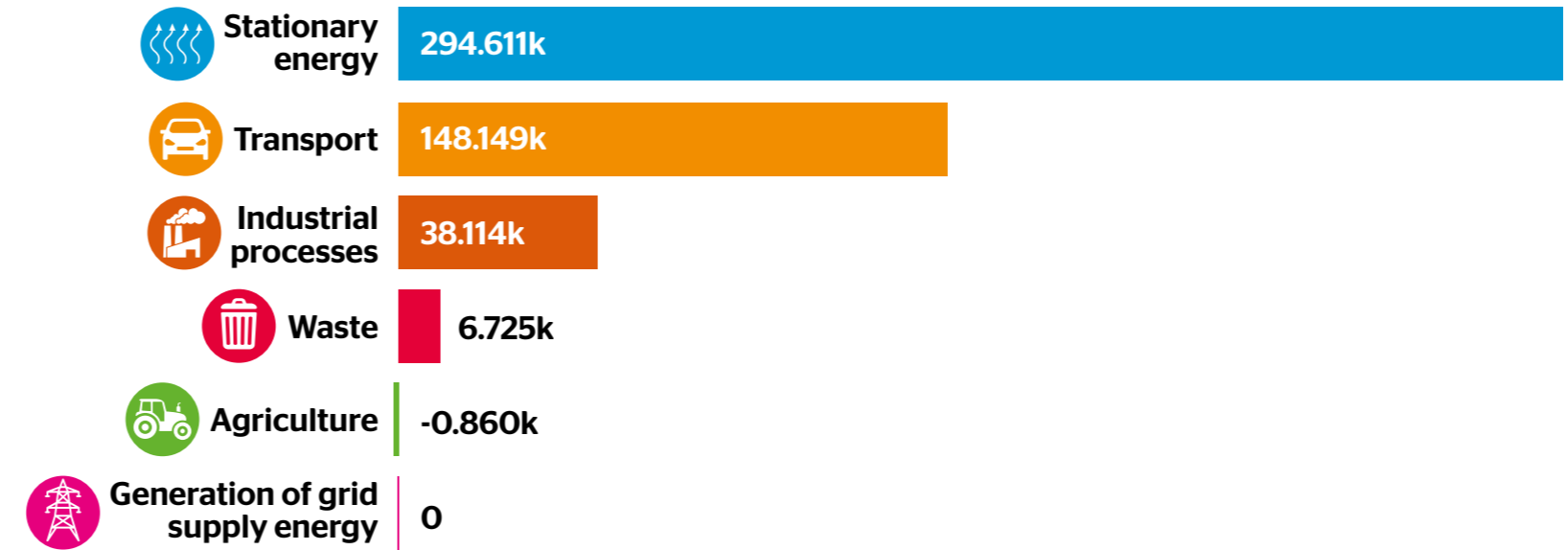
As part of development of this strategy, Watford Borough Council commissioned a study of the borough emissions to help inform and set context for residents and business. This study suggests an approach to reduce borough emissions, which is set out below. This requires the delivering of carbon reduction projects with a high level of ambition. In the study, the estimated emissions in 2030 are projected to be 215.462kt CO<sub>2e</sub>, which is a 32% reduction from the 2019 baseline, hence significant off setting would be required to achieve the ambition of a net zero borough.

### Targets

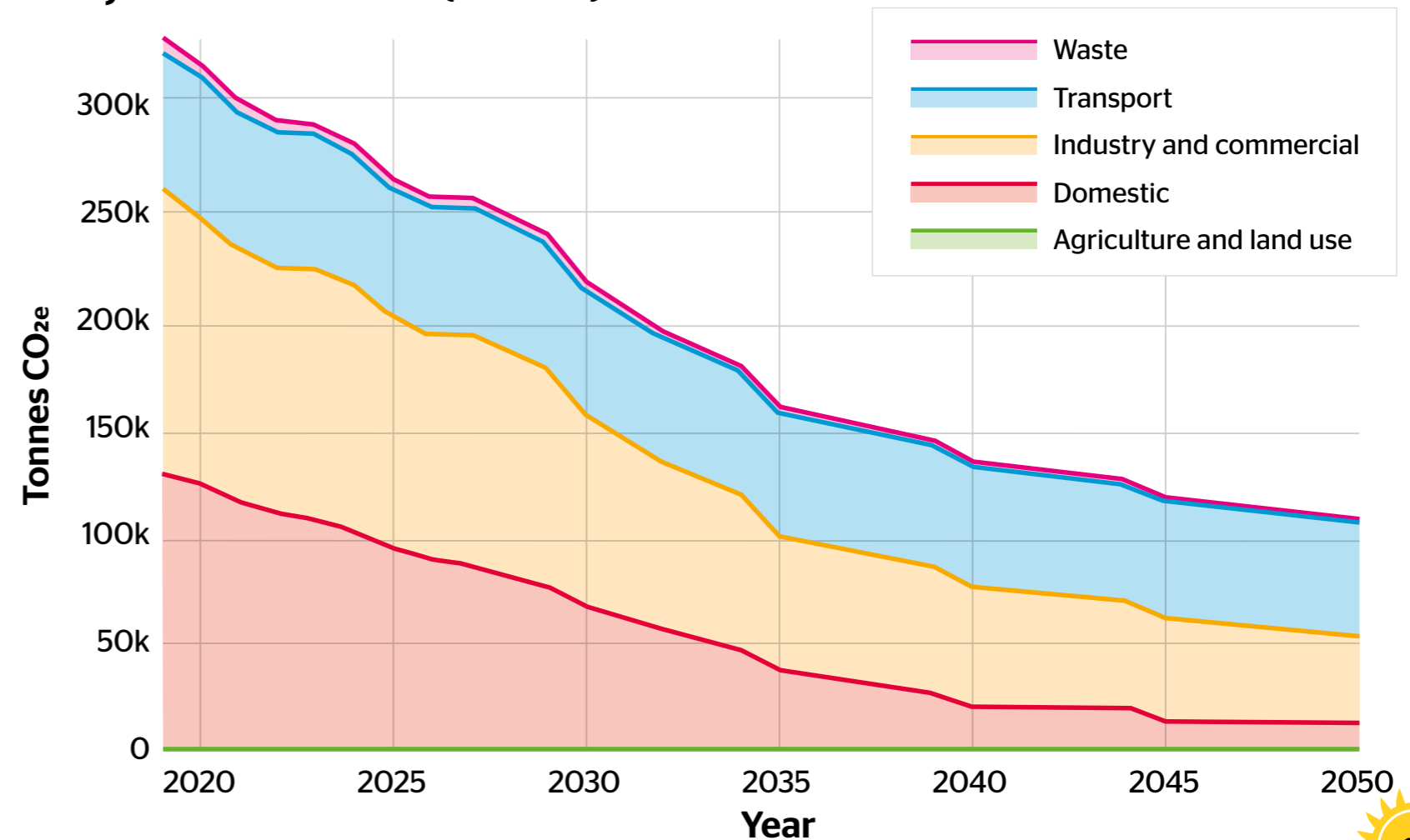
- Do everything in our power to achieve net zero carbon emissions (CO<sub>2e</sub>) for the borough by the end of 2030

<sup>12</sup> <https://carbonbudget.manchester.ac.uk/reports/E07000103/>

## Borough CO<sub>2e</sub> emissions by sector



## Current projected borough emissions summary by end use, 2020 - 2050 (tCO<sub>2e</sub>)



Following 2030, continued savings are required as well as continued off setting.



# Transport and travel

How people travel around the borough and beyond is a major element of our carbon emissions, contributing around 30%. Watford has set out its approach over the next 20 years in Transforming Travel in Watford (TTIW). The Council will be looking at how it can reduce the transport impacts from its own operations, both relating to staff commuting, and business and fleet usage. This strategy does not seek to replace the work set out in TTIW, rather to ensure they are complementary, and to set overarching targets.

TTIW sets out modal shifts, rather than carbon emission reductions, and is focused on reducing short journeys by private motorised vehicles, which will have local benefits through reduced congestion, improved local air quality and better health; as well as being something the Council can influence.

## Targets - Council: Leading by Example

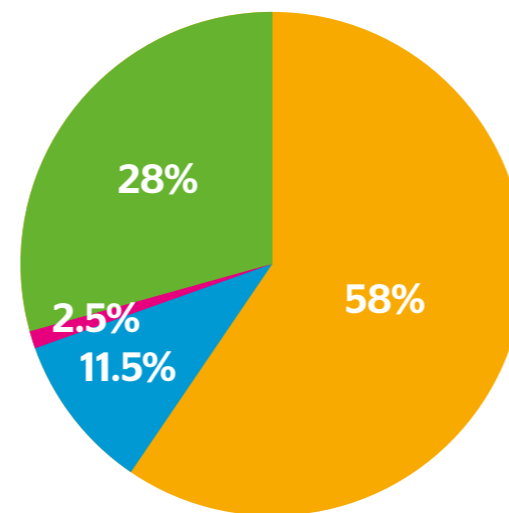
- Council business travel to transition to net zero by 2030, with the following interim reductions: 2025 - 50% reduction; 2027 - 75% reduction
- Staff travel and home working to transition to net zero by 2030, with the following interim reductions: 2025 - 25% reduction; 2027 - 50% reduction; 2029 - 75% reduction
- Council services transport fleet to transition to net zero by 2030, with the following interim reductions: 2025- 25% reduction; 2027 - 50% reduction; 2029 - 75% reduction

## Targets - Borough: People Power

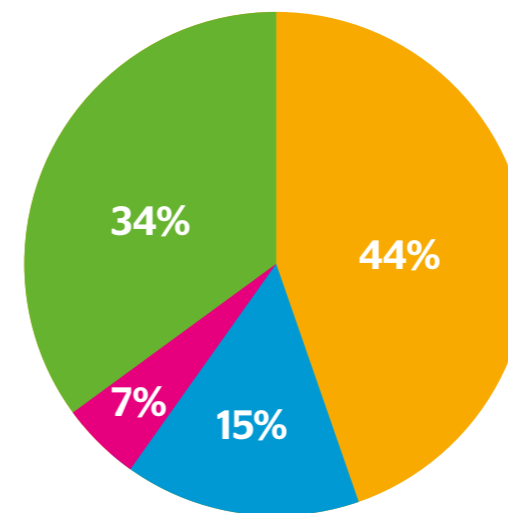
- Modal shift away from private cars - Public transport shift from 11.5% to 15%; cycle modal shift from 2.5% to 7% and walking modal shift from 28% to 34% by 2030

# How people travel in Watford

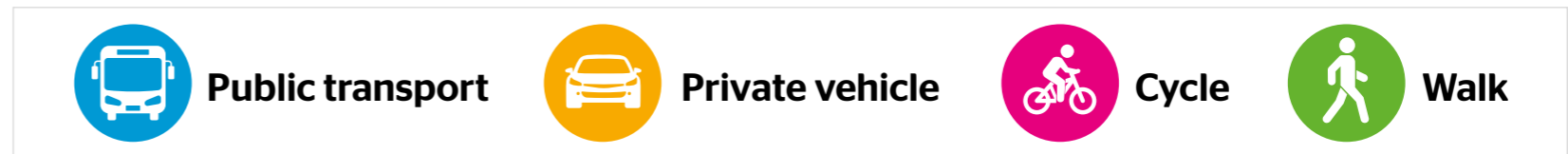
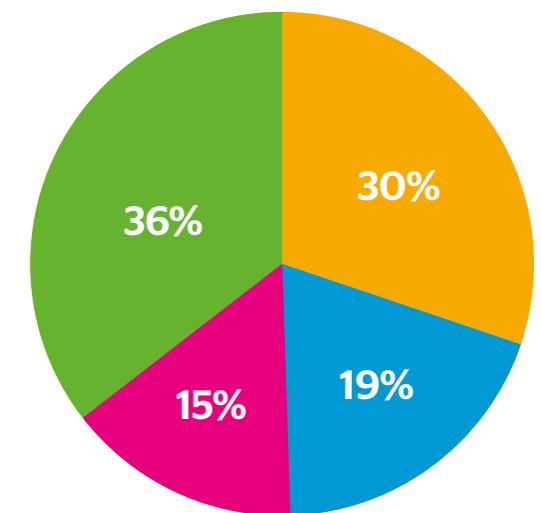
Where we are now



2030 target



2041 target



# Built environment

We spend around 90% of our time in buildings, and they have a significant impact on our CO<sub>2</sub> emissions. The energy efficiency of new buildings has been improving through building regulation and planning requirements. Our Local Plan will continue to champion these improvements within the legal parameters allowed.

The energy efficiency of existing buildings is a significant historical issue, and the Council has been working with partners to retrofit some residential buildings to reduce their energy consumption. It will seek to continue this work, within the resources available, while lobbying the government to ensure all buildings are adequately insulated, taking a fabric first approach (improve the thermal properties of the building as much as possible before improving the building services).

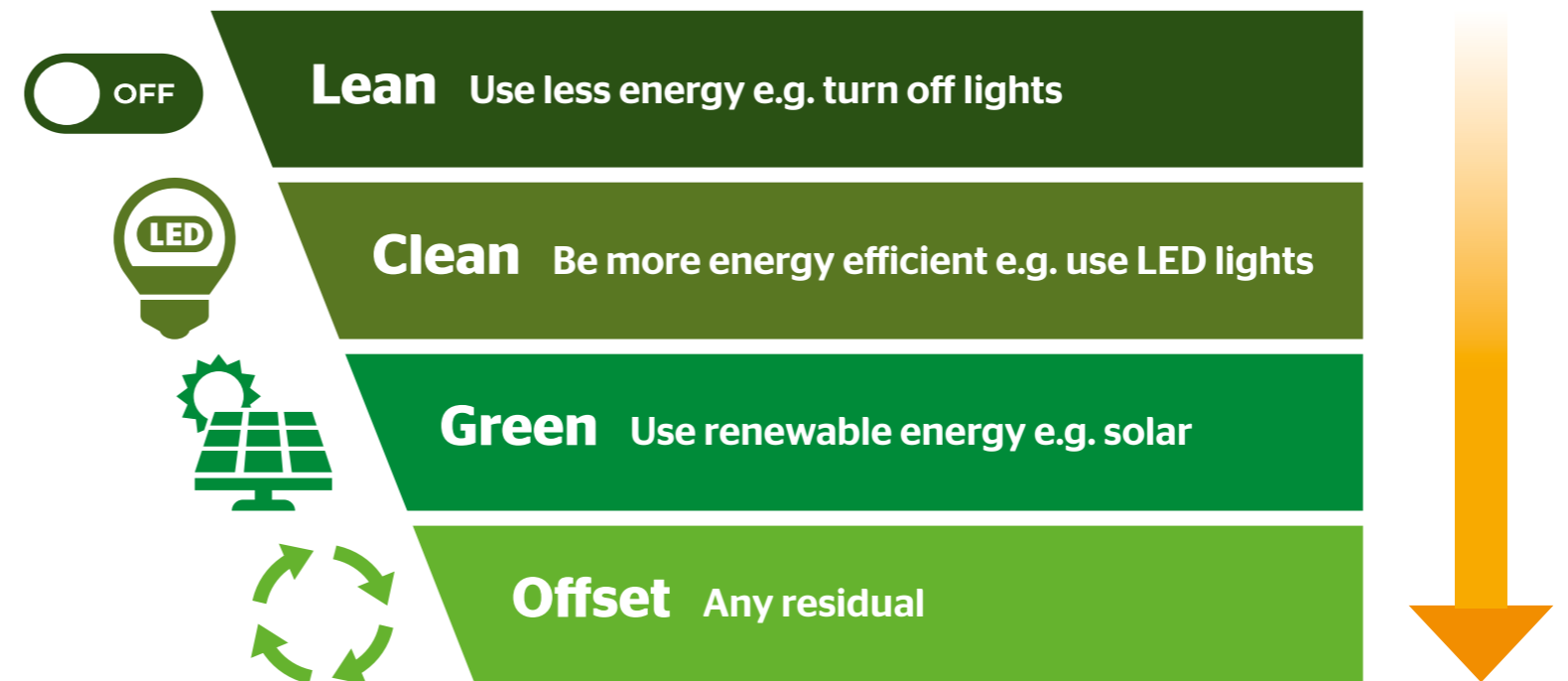
## Targets - Council: Leading by Example

- Council buildings net zero by 2030 - i.e. scope 1 and 2 for our buildings

## Targets - Borough: People Power

- Encourage and facilitate developers to build all new buildings to net zero standards by 2030
- Encourage and facilitate existing building owners to review their buildings for energy efficiency improvements, and implemented where practical by 2030
- Facilitate the means for all fuel poor dwellings to have an EPC rating of C or higher by 2030 where practical
- Facilitate rented properties to have an EPC rating of C or higher by 2030 where practical
- Encourage all dwellings to have an EPC rating of C or higher by 2030

# Energy hierarchy



# Nature and ecological restoration

The UK is one of the most biodiversity-depleted nations in the world with on average about half of its biodiversity remaining. We consistently rank in the bottom 10% of the world for 'biodiversity intactness,' and most profoundly in the South-East of England. Biodiversity provides us with clean air, water, food, fuel, fibre and optimal living conditions, and its loss poses a significant threat to life in this country. Maintaining biodiversity is a complex matter, affected by factors such as agriculture, development, pollution, climate change, fragmentation of habitat, and large declines in insect biomass (the volume/abundance of insects).

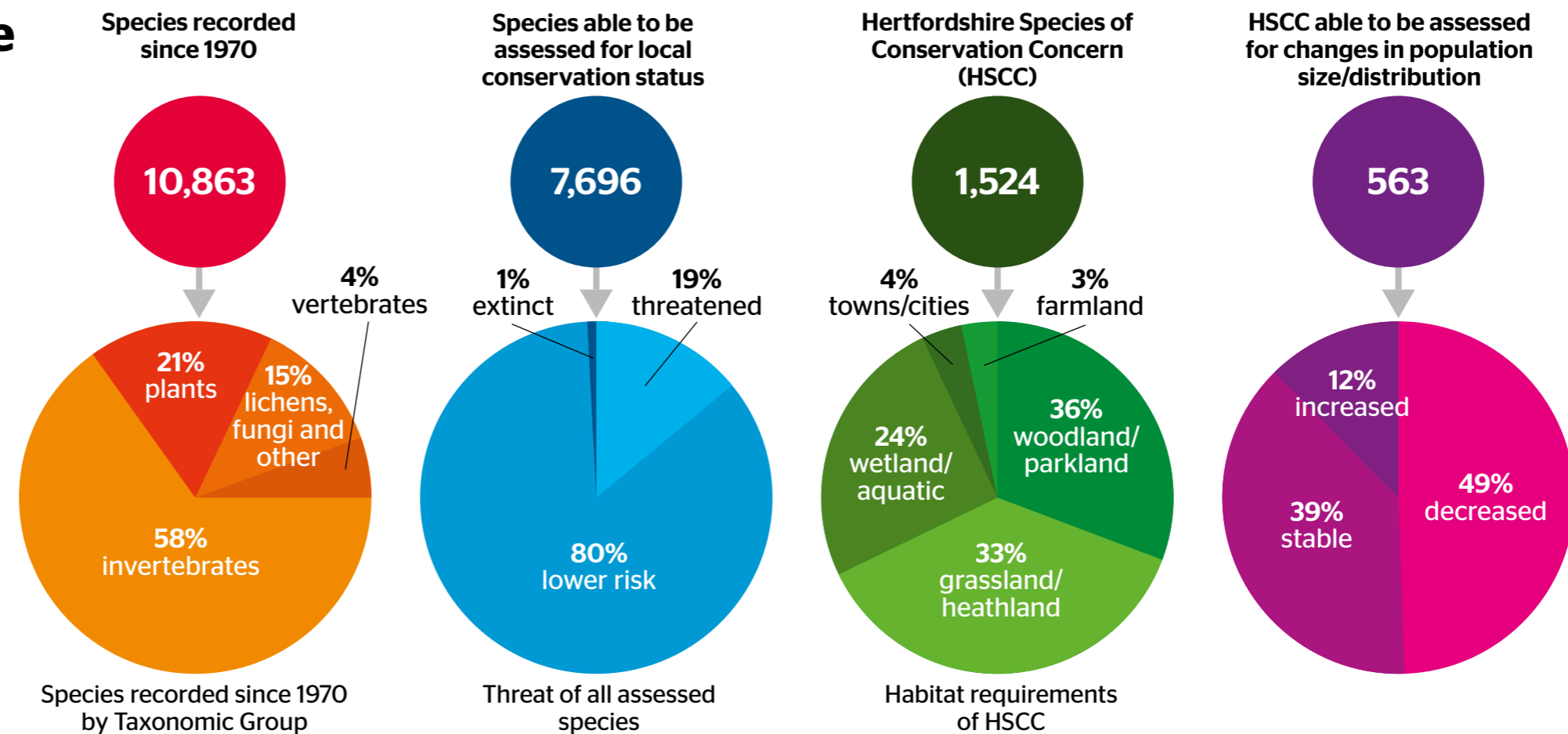
The latest (2019) UK State of Nature report<sup>13</sup> found that the abundance and distribution of the UK's species has, on average, declined since 1970 and that this decline has continued in the

last decade, despite conservation efforts. Similarly, Hertfordshire State of Nature shows the local position<sup>14</sup>.

The UK is home to 85% of the world's chalk rivers, unique habitats of which two run through Watford: the River Colne and River Gade, both of which are in 'moderate' condition as assessed under the water framework directive.

To halt biodiversity loss will require effective policy and strategy to deliver spatial planning, protection, land management and education.

## Hertfordshire state of nature 2020



<sup>13</sup> <https://nbn.org.uk/stateofnature2019/reports/>

<sup>14</sup> <https://www.hertswildlifetrust.org.uk/stateofnature>

## Nature

Watford also has a significant number of parks, green spaces and other areas of biodiversity, including 17 green flagged parks. The Council continue to demonstrate best practice in how it manages these, encourages wilder areas and works with residents to create wildlife refuges and corridors in their gardens and local areas.

The 2021 Environment Act set out the requirement for 10% biodiversity net gain for all new planning applications. This could have a beneficial effect in Watford. Hertfordshire County Council (HCC) are leading the development and management of the Local Nature Recovery Strategy, and Watford Borough Council will work closely with surrounding districts to ensure it contributes to nature recovery locally, along with the wildlife trusts, who have published their own strategy<sup>15</sup>.

While Watford has good quality green spaces, it is a very urban borough, with 21% of households without a private garden. We have 23.9m<sup>2</sup> of green space per capita, and the average walking distance to a park is 380m. For comparison, only 13% of households in Stevenage and Luton are without a private garden. Stevenage has 22.1m<sup>2</sup>/capita of green space on average 589 meters away, while Luton has 17.4m<sup>2</sup> of green space/capita, 605m away. During the Covid pandemic (2020 - 21), it became clear to all how important access to green space or private outdoor space is, for our mental health<sup>16</sup>.

## Targets - Council: Leading by example

- 30% by area of our green spaces managed to support nature by 2030; 20% by 2025
- 30% by area of our corporate estate green spaces managed to support nature by 2030; 10% by 2025

## Targets - Borough: People Power

- Biodiversity net gain of 10% or greater for all new development, with any offsetting occurring within the borough or adjoining boroughs/districts by 2030
- Minimum canopy target 25% by 2030; interim target of 20% by 2027<sup>17</sup>
- Work with partners to facilitate Rivers Colne and Gade in the borough meeting the Water Framework Directive (WFD) good standard for biodiversity and at least moderate for chemical water quality by 2030
- Maintain or improve access to private outdoor amenity space (e.g. gardens, balconies you can go out on, private communal spaces)
- Maintain or improve the green space per capita and distance from green space and improve where practical



<sup>15</sup> <https://www.hertswildlifetrust.org.uk/Wilder2030>

<sup>16</sup> <https://citymonitor.ai/community/green-space/urban-green-space-pandemic-diverse-communities> ; <https://friendsoftheearth.uk/nature/access-green-space-england-are-you-missing-out>

<sup>17</sup> According to Urbantreecover.org we are currently 18.2%

## Water

Water will increasingly become an issue, as weather patterns change, both through drought and heavier rainfall. This will have knock-on effects for our chalk or chalk-fed rivers, which are fed by ground water. Watford is in a low rainfall area, and so is already under water stress.

In addition, water is abstracted from the groundwater to supply homes and businesses in Watford, which also reduces the flow of the river and impacts on ecosystems and biodiversity. Watford has one of the poorest records of water conservation in the country. In Hertfordshire, we use, on average, 150 litres/person/day (l/p/d) compared with a national average of 142 l/p/d<sup>18</sup>. The UK is one of the higher users in Europe. New homes can be designed to achieve in the order of 80 l/p/d, with the local plan requiring 110 l/p/d or less. Reducing our water usage not only reduces the impact on our local watercourses and biodiversity, it also reduces our GHG emissions, due to the energy required to treat the water pre- and post-use, and potentially reduces the cost.

The heavier rainfall will have the potential to create flash floods especially after a prolonged period of dry weather, and not always where they have historically been. If road drainage systems can't cope, then more flooding is likely to occur. To address these risks, more natural rainwater management systems need to be considered, such as ponds or swales. These allow water to collect and then seep through the ground. Where this is not possible, other systems which allow water to slowly seep into the ground rather than discharge into the sewerage system need to be considered. Rainwater collection for use in gardens, homes and businesses will also be looked at.

### Targets - Council: Leading by example

- Council to ensure separate water monitoring for council activities by 2025
- Council to achieve water usage of 12 l/employee/day by 2030 for office based activities. An interim target for 2027 will be set in 2025<sup>19</sup>
- Ensure sports facilities, trees and amenity planting are primarily irrigated by rainwater where practicable by 2030

### Targets - Borough: People Power

- Support residents to achieve an annual average residential use of 110 l/p/d by 2030; interim targets of 145 l/p/d by 2025 and 130 l/p/d by 2027

## Pollution

In managing and restoring nature and ecology, we need to be mindful of pollution, including air, ground, water and light pollution. The Council is already proactive in this area and, for instance, will continue its good work on monitoring air pollution and identifying where interventions are required. The council is also addressing excess artificial light both in its own services and within the borough.

### Targets - Council: Leading by example

- For the council to meet the International Dark-Sky Associations 'Five Principles for Responsible Outdoor Lighting' across all council-operated properties by 2025 (darksky.org)

### Targets - Borough: People Power

- All Watford to meet national Air Quality Objectives and Air Quality Standards Regulations



<sup>18</sup> <https://www.watfordobserver.co.uk/news/19322364.giant-bathtub-watford-residents-asked-lower-water-usage/>

<sup>19</sup> CIRIA C657 Water Key Performance Indicators. 2006

# Food supply, security and waste

Food Waste is a major cause of environmental degradation. 10% of UK GHG emissions in 2019 are attributed to agriculture<sup>20</sup>. Globally, in the period between 2010 and 2019 agriculture, forestry and other managed land use accounted for between 13% and 21% of anthropogenic GHGs. Around 45% of that was the result of deforestation.

In Watford we introduced a separate food waste collection in September 2020. Previously it was collected with garden waste. While we don't yet have figures for food waste collection specifically for 2021/22, due to the changes in recycling (including food waste) Watford's recycling rate went up to 50% for the first time in 2020/21.

Different foods produce different GHG emissions, and impact can depend on the way food is farmed or produced, particularly the resources needed to feed livestock. Probably the simplest approach to eating sustainably is to eat seasonal, cook from fresh and source local; more vegetables and less meat. The graphic below illustrates the difference in embodied emissions in common protein sources.

With agriculture and food growing having a significant impact, it is imperative to reduce our avoidable food waste. Reducing our food waste has a number of benefits, not least reducing the cost to us, but also reducing the amount of food required to be produced and disposed of, and the land and energy these processes require.

Food security is increasingly going to become an issue as climate patterns change. Reductions in fossil fuel use, food miles and land availability will lead to changes in global supply. We need to look at how to increase the resilience of our food supply chain and increase its diversity, while ensuring that land is managed equitably. In this way we can ensure

the potentially competing demands of food growing, wild spaces and energy provision (e.g. biofuels, solar farms, wind farms) are effectively addressed.

While Watford has good allotment provision, it does not currently have much other food growing space, whether agricultural or horticultural. As an urban borough, it also does not have the hinterland to support the town within its own boundaries.

It is important to reconnect people to where their food comes from, and provide a way for all sectors of society to engage. This is being successfully achieved through the allotments, and can be extended through community growing initiatives such as Incredible Edible, community gardens, community allotments and market gardens, as well as edible landscaping.

### Targets - Council: Leading by example

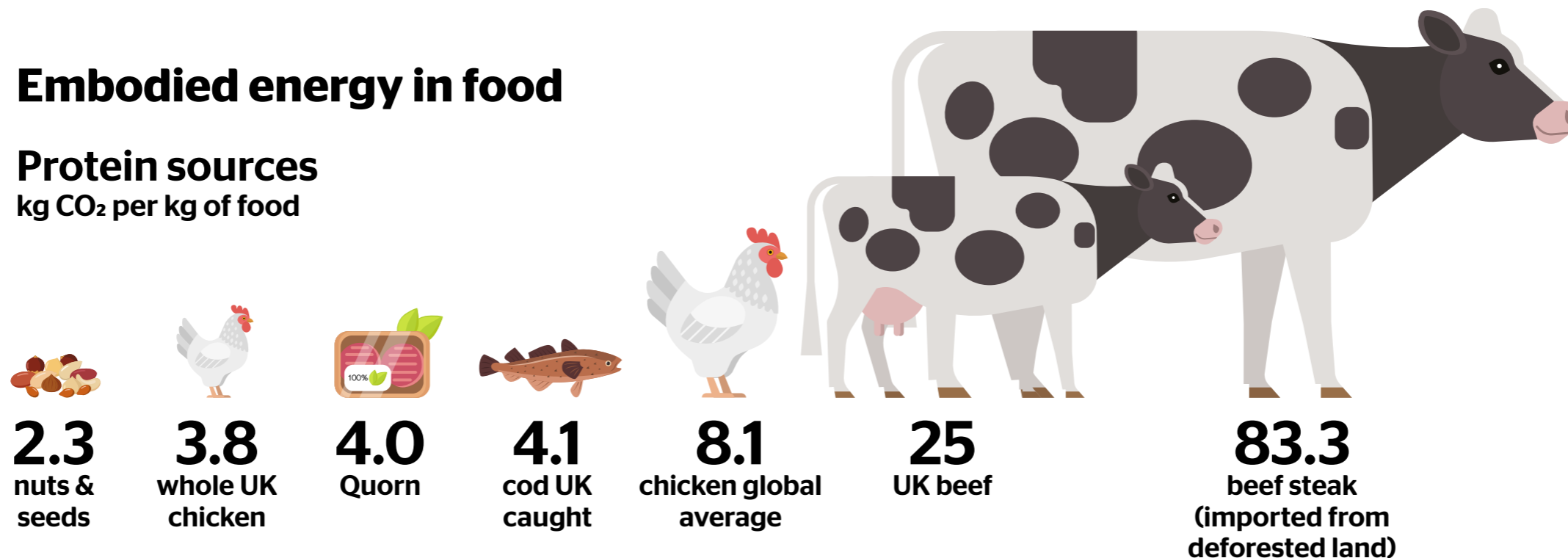
- WBC café/ concession operators to have in place an approach to increase plant based options and provide information on the carbon implications of food choices on the menu by 2030; this to be a requirement for all new operators by 2025

### Targets - Borough: People Power

- 60% of waste food collected to be recycled 2030; with interim targets of 50% by 2027
- Improve the ability of those in the borough to grow food, year on year

## Embodied energy in food

Protein sources  
kg CO<sub>2</sub> per kg of food



<sup>20</sup> [https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/agri-climate-report-2021/agri-climate-report-2021#:~:text=1.7%25%20of%20carbon%20dioxide%20\(CO2,relate%20mainly%20to%20fuel%20use](https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/agri-climate-report-2021/agri-climate-report-2021#:~:text=1.7%25%20of%20carbon%20dioxide%20(CO2,relate%20mainly%20to%20fuel%20use)



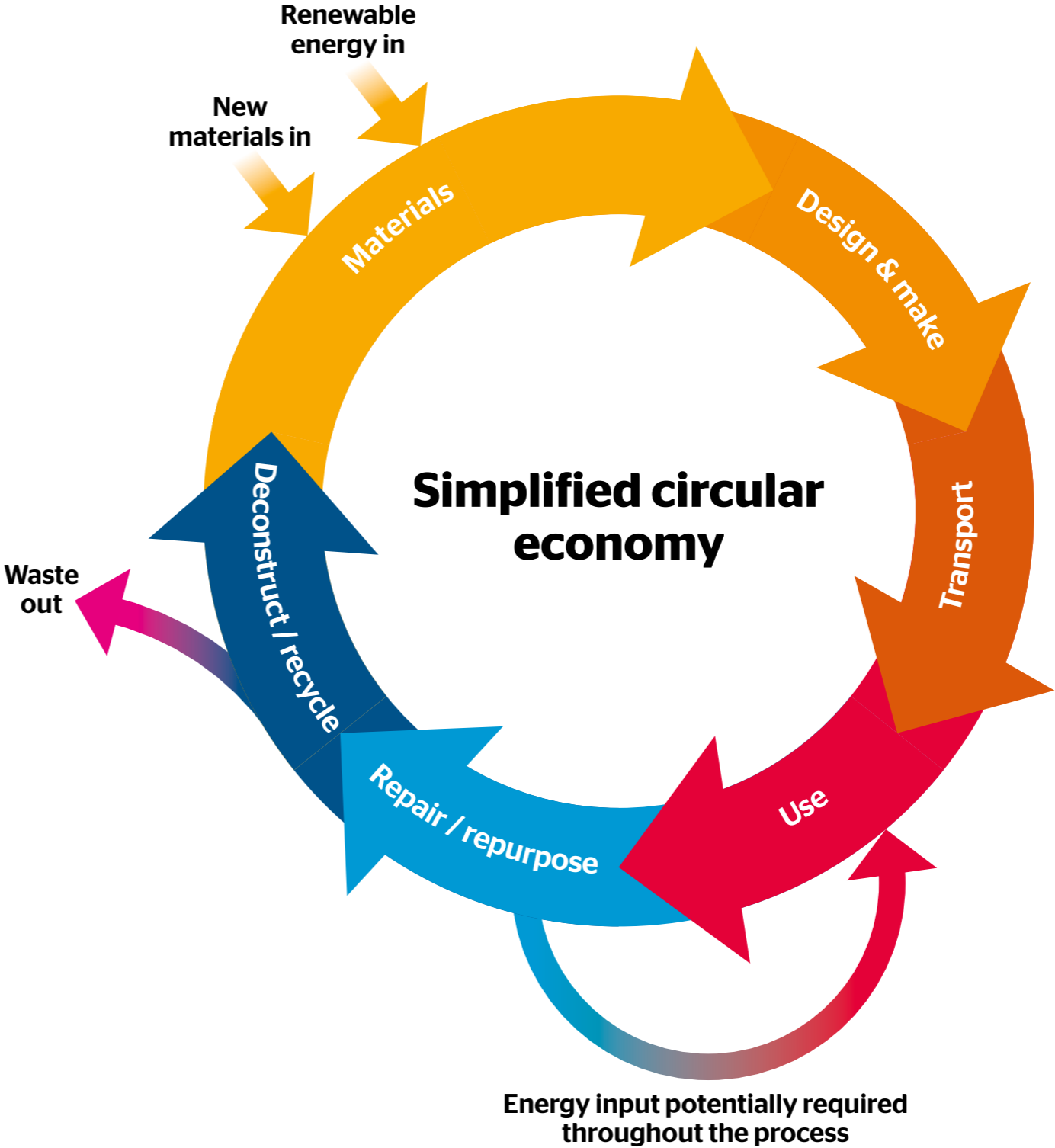
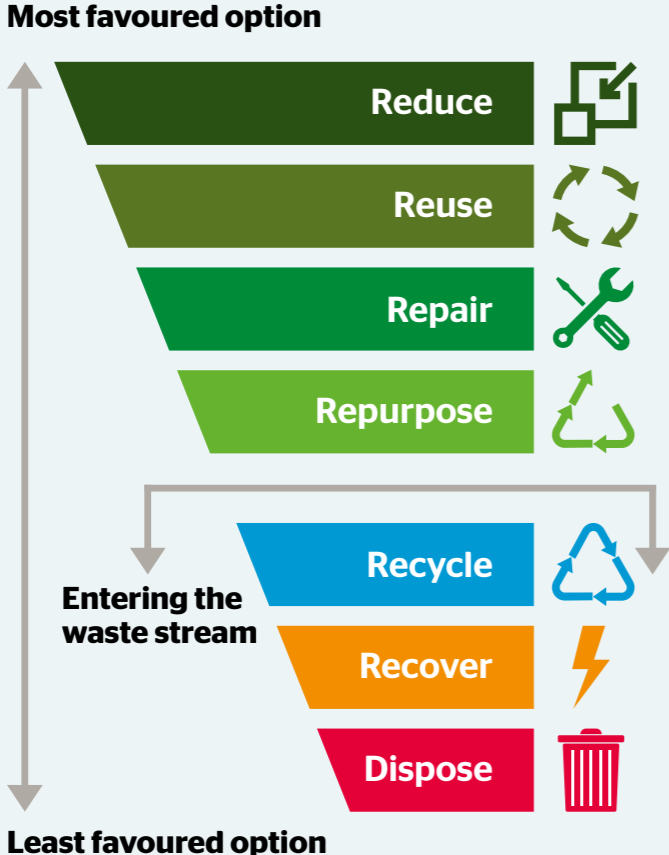
# Responsible resource use

A key part of our environmental impact comes from the things we consume, whether that is fast fashion, technology, food or our leisure activities. Food is considered in the Nature and Ecological Restoration section, and here we will consider all other areas of consumption.

As a society, we need to be making better use of resources, consuming and buying only what we need. The things we produce and buy should be reusable, repairable and recyclable.

We need to consider responsible resource use in two ways: the waste hierarchy and the circular economy.

## Waste hierarchy



## Council - leading by example

Responsible resource use for the Council is about making sure that the appropriate materials and products are procured, which are designed to operate for the appropriate lifetime, can be repaired, and then recycled effectively after use.

Within its own operations, the Council will seek to reduce the amount of waste generated, with materials being reused or recycled where ever practical. It will consider end of life/ disposal of goods in its purchasing decisions. It will also work with staff to inform them of the importance of reducing material use and waste, and the actions they can take.

The Council introduced a new purchasing strategy in 2022, with significant environmental requirements. This will be reviewed and updated as required over the life of this strategy.

### Targets

- Council-generated waste reduced to as near zero as practicable by 2030
- Ensure the Council itself is recycling 60% of waste generated by 2025 and 70% by 2028

## Borough - people power

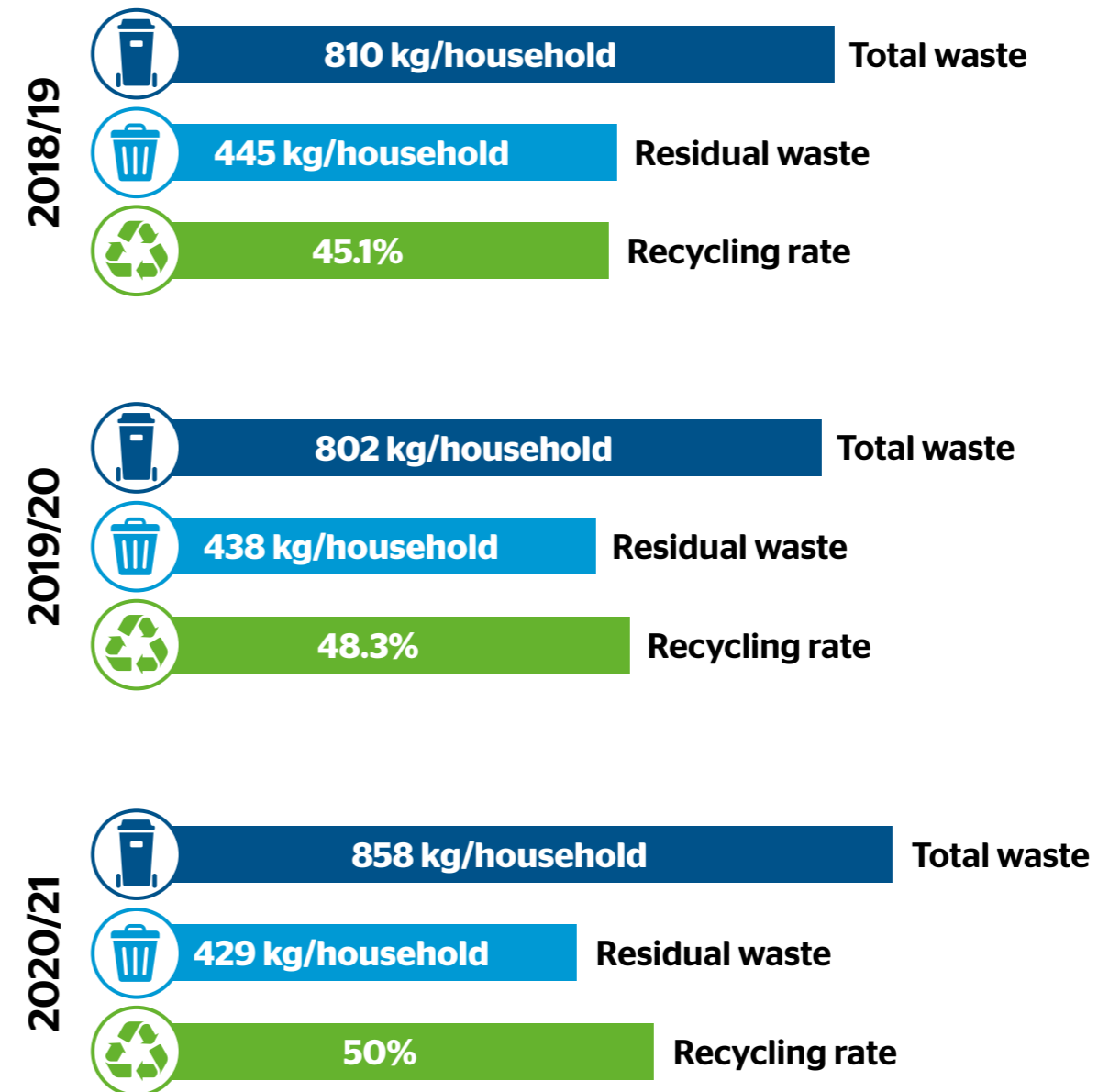
In Watford, in 2020/21 the average household generated 858kg of waste, which was up from 802 the previous year. We recycled 50% of the waste generated, up 4.7% (the greatest increase in Hertfordshire) and the first time Watford has reached the 50% mark. The national target is to achieve at least 65% recycling rate by 2035, and it is estimated if all recyclable material was collected we would achieve just under 70%. To achieve this in Watford will require borough-wide action, and facilitation by the Council and its contractor.

While we are improving in household recycling, we also need to reduce the total amount of waste generated. In general it requires less resources to recycle something than to make it from virgin material, however, that is still more than is required if we didn't need to make it at all. Some materials are also not infinitely recyclable, and degrade through the recycling process.

### Targets

- Borough is recycling 60% of its residential waste by 2030; with an interim target of 54% by 2027
- Residential borough waste reduced by 50% by 2030, based on 2019/20
- Businesses to reduce their waste by 50% by 2030, based on 2019/20

## Residents waste and recycling rate



Average household waste generated/recycled



# Adapting to change

Even if we meet our 2030 commitment within the Borough, the UK meets its 2050 commitment, and globally we ensure an average temperature change of 1.5°C or lower by 2100, we will still be facing changes: more extreme weather and impacts on global networks which will filter to the local level - especially related to food, water and energy.

We can see this happening already. Previously rare “100 year storms” are happening more regularly, and the Thames flood barrier is being used with increasing frequency in response to rising sea levels<sup>21</sup>. Sea level has risen by approximately 15cm between 1911 and 2018, with the rate of rise accelerating. It is predicted it could increase by 1.15m in 2100 compared to 1990<sup>22</sup>. Recent reports have suggested that we have locked in 27cm of sea level rise from the Greenland Ice shelf regardless of future warming<sup>23</sup>. In 2021 the global average temperature was 1.1°C<sup>24</sup> above pre-industrial levels and we have already seen temperatures at unprecedented levels, such as the 2022 maximum UK temperature of 40°C.

Put simply, in Watford we will have heavier rainfalls, probably on drier ground, so more flash floods are likely. We will have more extremely hot days, where it is difficult to keep cool, with the potential for heat-related deaths, fires, and failures of infrastructure. Very urban parts of Watford will suffer more than more suburban parts, or rural Hertfordshire, due to the urban heat island effect, caused in part due to reduced vegetation and increased paved and built-over areas. We will also have more water restrictions, as rain does not seep into the aquifers and recharge them.

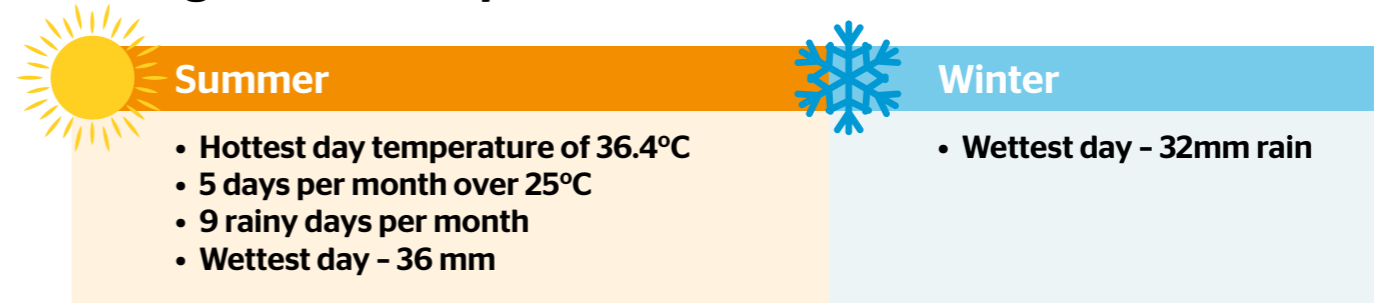
According to the UK climate change committee, the top 6 risks from climate change in the UK are flooding, overheating, food security, water supplies/drought, threat to nature, and, new and emerging pests and disease<sup>25</sup>. In recent years we have already seen the impact a new disease can have on our society.

This demonstrates, that even if we limit warming to below 1.5°C, we will have to adapt to the changes in climate. This will include the need to:

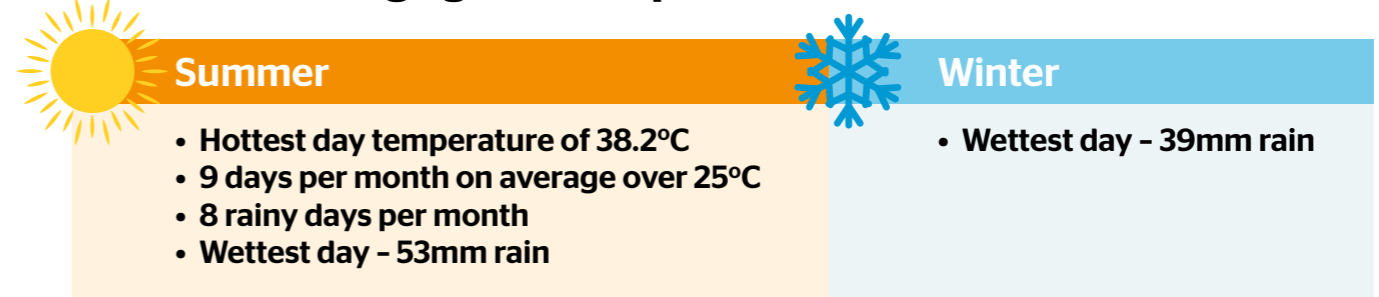
- Ensure we can maintain a cool place to go during the hottest weather
- Be able to deal with the flash floods from the heavier rain fall
- Adapt to the consequences of fewer rainy days, and the effect that has on our rivers, water supplies and food supplies

## BBC’s climate change site, based on Met Office data, shows for Watford

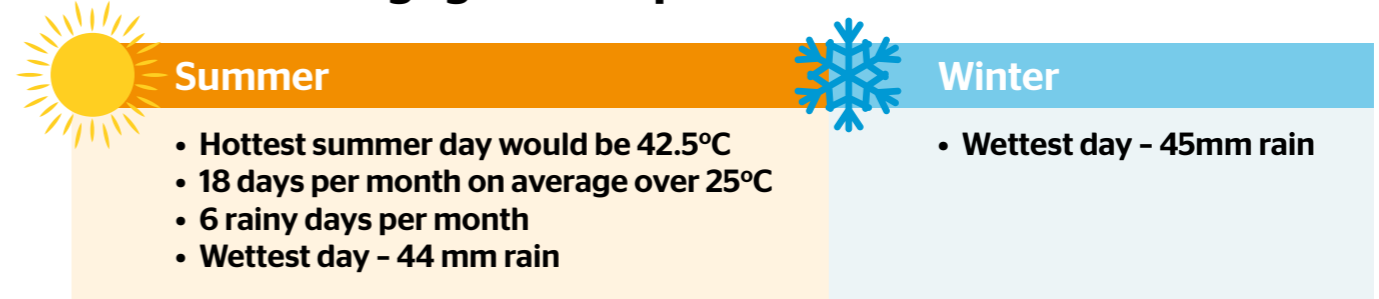
### Average over last 30 years



### 2°C rise of average global temperature



### 4°C rise of average global temperature



<sup>21</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/thames-estuary-2100-te2100/thames-estuary-2100-key-findings-from-the-monitoring-review>

<sup>22</sup> What 1m sea level rise might look like: [https://coastal.climatecentral.org/map/7/-0.3621/52.7978/?theme=water\\_level&map\\_type=water\\_level\\_above\\_mhhw&basemap=roadmap&contiguous=true&elevation\\_model=best\\_available&water\\_level=1.0&water\\_unit=m](https://coastal.climatecentral.org/map/7/-0.3621/52.7978/?theme=water_level&map_type=water_level_above_mhhw&basemap=roadmap&contiguous=true&elevation_model=best_available&water_level=1.0&water_unit=m)

<sup>23</sup> <https://www.nature.com/articles/s41558-022-01441-2>; <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2022/aug/29/major-sea-level-rise-caused-by-melting-of-greenland-ice-cap-is-now-inevitable-27cm-climate>

<sup>24</sup> <https://news.un.org/en/story/2022/05/1117842>

<sup>25</sup> <https://www.theccc.org.uk/publication/independent-assessment-of-uk-climate-risk/>

## Council - leading by example

Adaptation will be required across all sectors of the Council and the community. As part of its commitment to lead by example, the Council will ensure that climate change and ecological degradation are included in its risk register, and adaptation measures are identified and adopted as necessary.

As part of this adaptation, we need to ensure that we support the development of resilient communities, both in terms of physical infrastructure and social infrastructure.

### Targets

- Corporate and service risk registers explicitly address climate change, and report on climate incidents by 2024
- All our operations and services ready for future climates (based on most up to date climate projections for the UK) by 2030
- Ensure that the Council has addressed the Government's 8 priority risk areas by 2025<sup>26</sup>
- Ensure that information and education is available about climate change, risk and adaptations for local people and groups by 2024, and regular (at least annual) updates are sent thereafter

## Borough - people power

Across the borough, businesses, community groups and individuals need to consider the risks from a changing climate, what they can do to mitigate those risks, how they need to adapt their practices to minimise the risks and what they can do to help others adapt and survive as the climate changes.

### Targets

- Facilitate the Borough to be ready for future climates by 2030
- Encourage and facilitate all housing providers and developers to provide a climate change risk register, guidance by 2025, with actions to mitigate and actions for adaptation by 2030



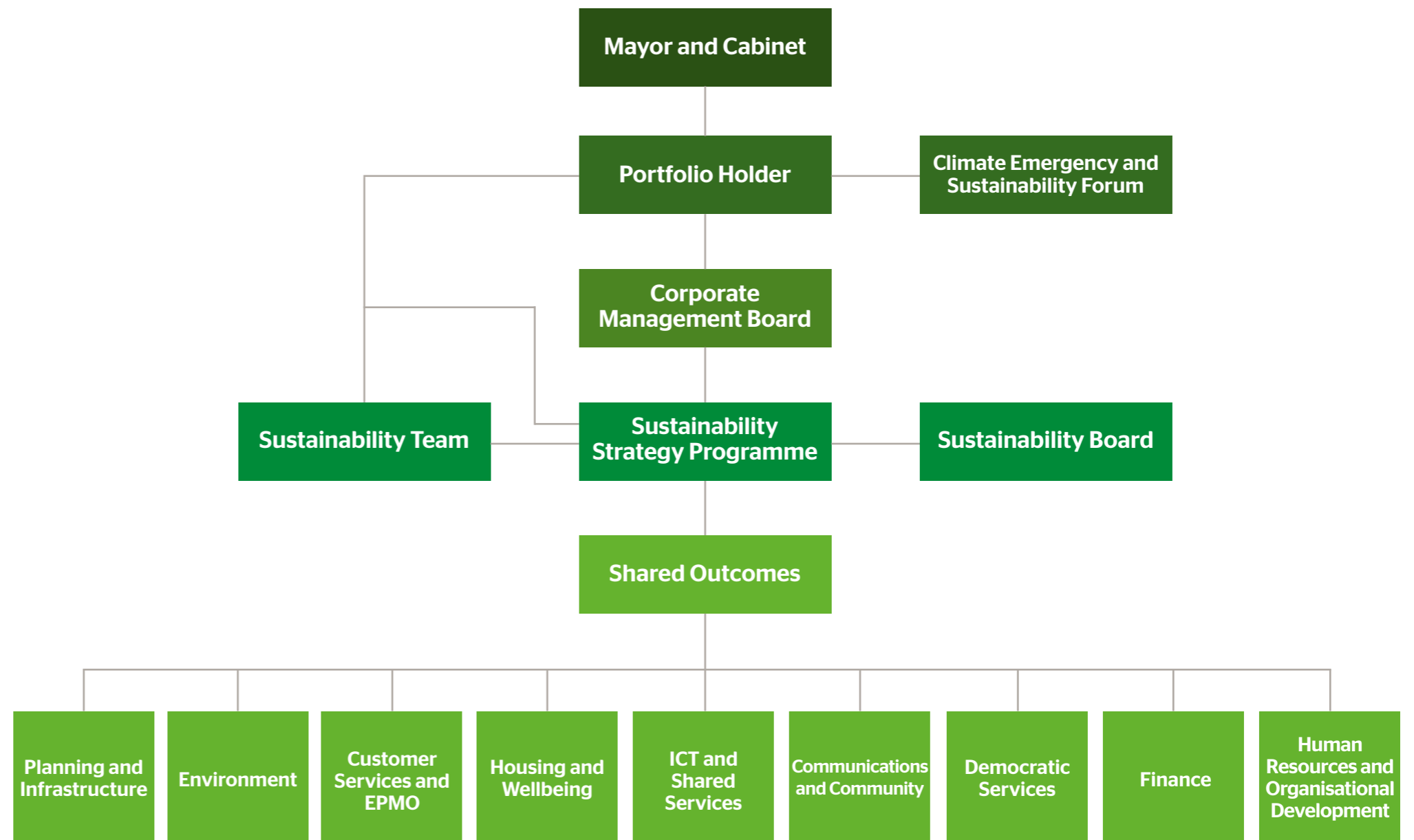
<sup>26</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/uk-climate-change-risk-assessment-2022>

# Governance

To ensure that the strategy and delivery is effective, it needs to have the correct governance. This needs to include:

-  **Internal governance**
-  **Accountability to councillors and the community**
-  **Transparency**
-  **Scrutiny**
-  **Reporting**
-  **Reviewing and updating**

## Internal governance



The Environmental Strategy will be owned by the Portfolio Holder for Sustainability and internally by the Sustainability Board. The latter will meet monthly. However, sustainability is a cross cutting issue with actions required by all within the Council.

The Environmental Strategy progress will be reported quarterly as part of the existing Performance and Progress reporting to Cabinet and Overview and Scrutiny Committee. There will be a quarterly agenda item at Corporate Management Board on sustainability to ensure key projects and progress are discussed.

In addition, there will be a specific annual agenda item at cabinet level on sustainability to discuss the review and revision of the delivery plan. There will also be a regular away day of key people - officers and councillors, to ensure that the strategy and direction remains robust and integrated.

Where shortfalls to targets are identified, these will be addressed at the appropriate level, and the delivery plan will be adapted accordingly.

The role of Portfolio Holder for Sustainability will be extremely important in ensuring that changes are integrated and delivered across everything the Council does.

#### Relationship of this strategy to others:

- Carbon, water and ecological targets within this strategy to override all strategies
- Through carbon budgets etc. this will embed in to other strategies
- Transport will be primarily governed through the Transforming Travel in Watford Strategy
- As new economic development and well-being strategies are developed, they will incorporate the climate change and ecological emergency requirements into their approach

## Accountability to Councillors and the community

The role of Portfolio Holder for Sustainability is critical in to ensure accountability. Meetings between the sustainability team and the Portfolio Holder will take place at least monthly.

Three times a year, the Climate Emergency and Sustainability Forum (CESF) will meet, chaired by the Portfolio Holder for Sustainability and comprised of councillors and officers. This will be a forum for presenting progress and projects, as well as gathering feedback and ideas.

Three times a year, and following on from the CESF, there will also be a public Sustainability Forum. This will be chaired by the Portfolio Holder for Sustainability, with dates agreed on a yearly basis (in line with the dates agreed for the CESF). It will be open to all members of the public to discuss the Council's progress and approach to sustainability, providing feedback and ideas. It will not be a decision making forum.

Finally there will be an annual item in the Cabinet/Council meeting to update and discuss progress. It will be agreed at the start of the strategy which meeting this will be and reviewed as required.

The council will set up a climate critical friend panel, made up of 8-15 members, representing the borough. This will provide input into the biennial delivery plan and help to facilitate change in the borough.



## Reporting

There are two types of reporting:

- **Internal reporting takes place at different levels and detail, ensuring that it is possible to determine our performance in relation to our target. This reporting will fit within the existing Council reporting structure, and make use of the existing Business Intelligence system. This has been described above.**
- **External reporting - producing easily accessible, publically available reports**

External reporting will take place annually. The reports will include:

- **Carbon emissions - for both the Council (and its investments) and the borough, and showing how this is performing against target**
- **Water usage for the borough and the Council**
- **Biodiversity - initially this will relate to the amount of green space managed for nature and the canopy cover. Once the new biodiversity strategy is developed with an appropriate metric related to the ecological emergency and how it can be addressed in Watford, we will incorporate that into this strategy**
- **Waste**
- **Progress on delivery plan**

## Review and updating

The strategy document is an 8 year strategy, and it is anticipated that the key targets and approaches are robust enough to be appropriate for this timescale. However, there will be a review and consultation at the end of the second delivery plan to ensure it is still current and meets aspirations.

## Delivery plan

The delivery plan is the working document, and will be a rolling two year plan, which will be reviewed, updated, and reported on annually. Update on progress will be given to the sustainability board at least quarterly, the Corporate Management Board and Strategic Portfolio Holders at least every six months, and annually to the Cabinet or Council.

An annual update will show actions delivered against short and medium term projects. It will also set out priorities for actions identified, and ways of determining the priorities.

While it may be a two year plan, the delivery plan may contain projects which last longer than this timeframe. These projects will be included in subsequent delivery plans as necessary.

The delivery plan will include prioritisation of actions, along with costings, resource requirements, timeframes and completion dates.

Within the delivery plan there will also be included some 'experimental' or pilot projects, requirements, timeframes and completion dates.





# **Watford's Environmental Strategy:**

Addressing the Climate and Ecological Emergency

2023 - 2030

**[www.watford.gov.uk/sustainablewatford](http://www.watford.gov.uk/sustainablewatford)**

# Watford's Environmental Strategy:

## Addressing the Climate and Ecological Emergency

2023 - 2030

### Summary



**WATFORD  
BOROUGH  
COUNCIL**

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# Overview of the strategy

The strategy has two overarching themes:

-  Leading by example
-  People power

And four sustainability topics:

-  Achieving net zero
-  Nature and ecological restoration
-  Responsible resource use
-  Adapting to change

We also have five overarching targets split between the two themes:

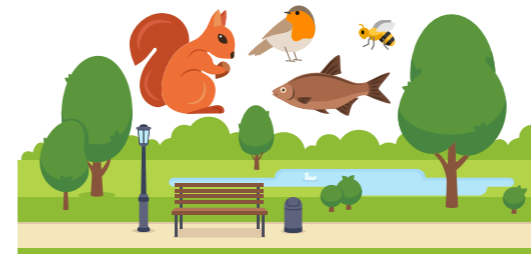
## Leading by example



Council's own carbon emissions (CO<sub>2e</sub>) to be net zero carbon by the end of 2030



Council's own waste reduced to near zero by 2030



30% by area of our green spaces managed to support nature by 2030

## People power



Do everything in our power to achieve net zero carbon emissions (CO<sub>2e</sub>) for the borough by the end of 2030



Do everything in our power to reduce waste by 50% by 2030, with recycling making up at least 60% of the waste

# Leading by example

We know that to make behaviour change happen in our town, it must start with us. And to enable the council to lead the way towards a more sustainable future, collaborating with partners and stakeholders is essential.

## Targets

- To meet the Council Plan's Greener, Brighter Future commitments by 2026
- Ensure that the council is a leader in coordinating with stakeholders across the borough to address the climate and ecological emergencies
- Environmental strategy targets and associated actions embedded in all council strategies and plans as they are developed or reviewed, or by 2030 at the latest
- Councillors and all staff trained on the strategy and its impacts, climate change and the ecological emergency by 2024, and ongoing annual or biennial thereafter
- Ensure the council lobbies regionally and nationally to improve the ability of Watford, and the UK, to meet their environmental targets
- Annual reporting of key targets from 2024
- Regular review of the procurement strategy 2022 - 2026
- Ensure ESG remains a key consideration in where we invest
- Property investments (excluding FRI leases extending beyond 2030) to have EPC rating of B or higher by 2030
- ESG/Environmental impacts to be a key consideration in all new JV and own projects by 2025

# People power

We all have a role to play in creating a happy, healthy and thriving town. Some targets require borough-wide action, needing widespread engagement to achieve success.

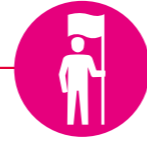
## Targets

- 10% of Watford Households signed up to Count Us In or equivalent by 2025; 25% by 2027; 50% by 2030
- Engage with 50% of fuel poor households on how they can reduce their energy costs by 2025; 75% by 2027 and 90% by 2030
- 50% SME and large businesses signed up to sustainable business charter by March 2025; 75% by March 2027
- 25% micro businesses signed up to sustainable business pledge by March 2025; 50% by March 2027
- Increase uptake of local climate initiatives by 10% year-on-year from 2024 to 2030
- Increase by at least 10% year-on-year opportunities for people to be engaged with educational or voluntary activities in this area
- Develop a skills and employment plan, with green skills and jobs as a key strand, by 2024, implementing the targets and actions thereafter



# Achieving net zero

Watford Borough Council has committed to achieving net zero carbon (CO<sub>2</sub>equivalent) in its operations by 2030 and supporting the borough to reach net zero by the same year. Put simply, net zero refers to the balance between the amount of greenhouse gas produced and the amount removed from the atmosphere. We reach net zero when the amount we add is no more than the amount taken away.



## Targets: Leading by example

- To achieve net zero carbon by 2030 in the stepped reduction as shown below:

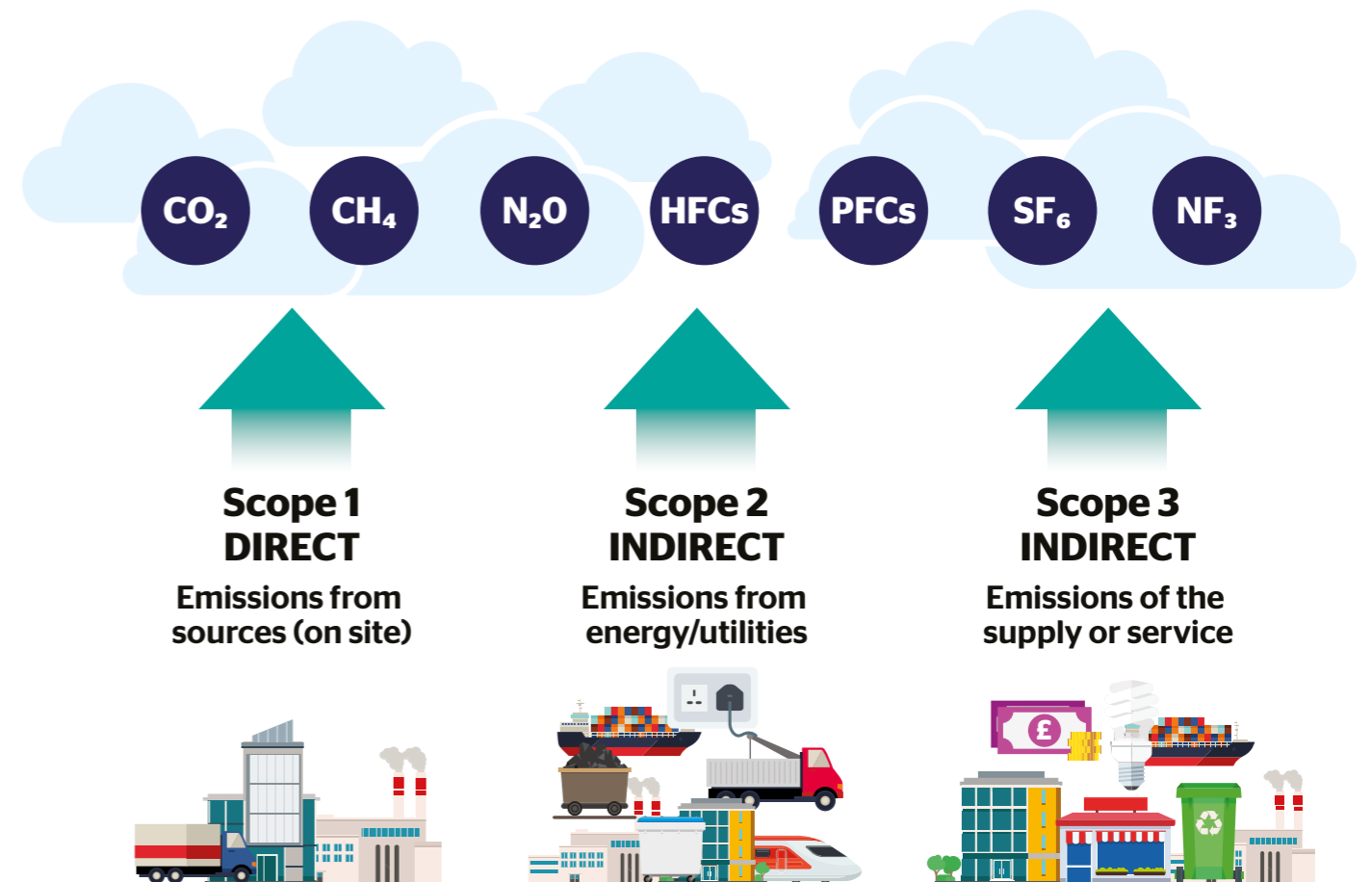
Year	Percentage reduction %	Percentage offsetting %	Total %
2025	22	6	28
2027	40	11	51
2029	60	19	79
2030	75	25	100

- Council business travel to transition to net zero by 2030, with the following interim reductions: 2025 - 50% reduction; 2027 - 75% reduction
- Staff travel and home working to transition to net zero by 2030, with the following interim reductions: 2025 - 25% reduction; 2027 - 50% reduction; 2029 - 75% reduction
- Council services transport fleet to transition to net zero by 2030, with the following interim reductions: 2025 - 25% reduction; 2027 - 50% reduction; 2029 - 75% reduction
- Council buildings net zero by 2030 - i.e. scope 1 and 2 for our buildings

## Targets: People power



- Do everything in our power to achieve net zero carbon emissions (CO<sub>2</sub>e) for the borough by the end of 2030
- Modal shift away from private cars - public transport shift from 11.5% to 15%; cycle modal shift from 2.5% to 7% and walking modal shift from 28% to 34% by 2030
- Encourage and facilitate developers to build all new buildings to net zero standards by 2030
- Encourage and facilitate existing building owners to review their buildings for energy efficiency improvements, implementing where practical by 2030
- Facilitate the means for all fuel poor dwellings to have an EPC rating of C or higher by 2030 where practical
- Facilitate rented properties to have an EPC rating of C or higher by 2030 where practical
- Encourage all dwellings to have an EPC rating of C or higher by 2030



# Nature and ecological restoration

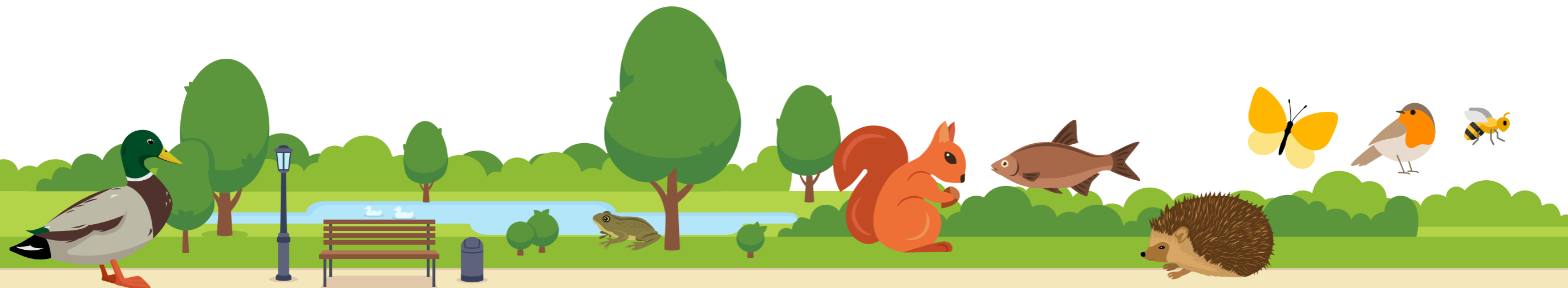
The UK is one of the least biodiverse nations and ranks low globally for biodiversity intactness. This is especially true in southeast England, where we also have rare chalk streams. Watford, a water-stressed area with high water usage, faces issues with nature, water, pollution, and food security.

## Targets: Leading by example

- 30% by area of our green spaces managed to support nature by 2030; 20% by 2025
- 30% by area of our corporate estate green spaces managed to support nature by 2030; 10% by 2025
- Council to ensure separate water monitoring for council activities by 2025
- Council to achieve water usage of 12 l/employee/day by 2030 for office based activities. An interim target for 2027 will be set in 2025
- Ensure sports facilities, trees and amenity planting are primarily irrigated by rainwater where practicable by 2030
- For the council to meet the International Dark-Sky Association's 'Five Principles for Responsible Outdoor Lighting' across all council-operated properties by 2025 (darksky.org)
- WBC café/ concession operators to have in place an approach to increase plant-based options and provide information on the carbon implications of food choices on the menu by 2030; this to be a requirement for all new operators by 2025

## Targets: People power

- Biodiversity net gain of 10% or greater for all new developments, with any offsetting occurring within the borough or adjoining boroughs/districts by 2030
- Minimum canopy target 25% by 2030; interim target of 20% by 2027
- Work with partners to facilitate Rivers Colne and Gade in the borough meeting the Water Framework Directive (WFD) good standard for biodiversity and at least moderate for chemical water quality by 2030
- Maintain or improve access to private outdoor amenity space (e.g. gardens, balconies you can go out on, private communal spaces)
- Maintain or improve the green space per capita and distance from green space and improve where practical
- Support residents to achieve an annual average residential use of 110 l/p/d by 2030; interim targets of 145 l/p/d by 2025 and 130 l/p/d by 2027
- All Watford to meet national Air Quality Objectives and Air Quality Standards Regulations
- 60% of waste food collected to be recycled by 2030; with interim targets of 50% by 2027
- Improve the ability of those in the borough to grow food, year-on-year



# Responsible resource use

A key part of our environmental impact comes from what we consume, such as fashion, technology, food, and leisure activities. This section focuses on non-food consumption, using the waste hierarchy, and promoting a circular economy.

## Targets: Leading by example



- Council-generated waste reduced to as near zero as practicable by 2030
- Ensure the council itself is recycling 60% of waste generated by 2025 and 70% by 2028

## Targets: People power

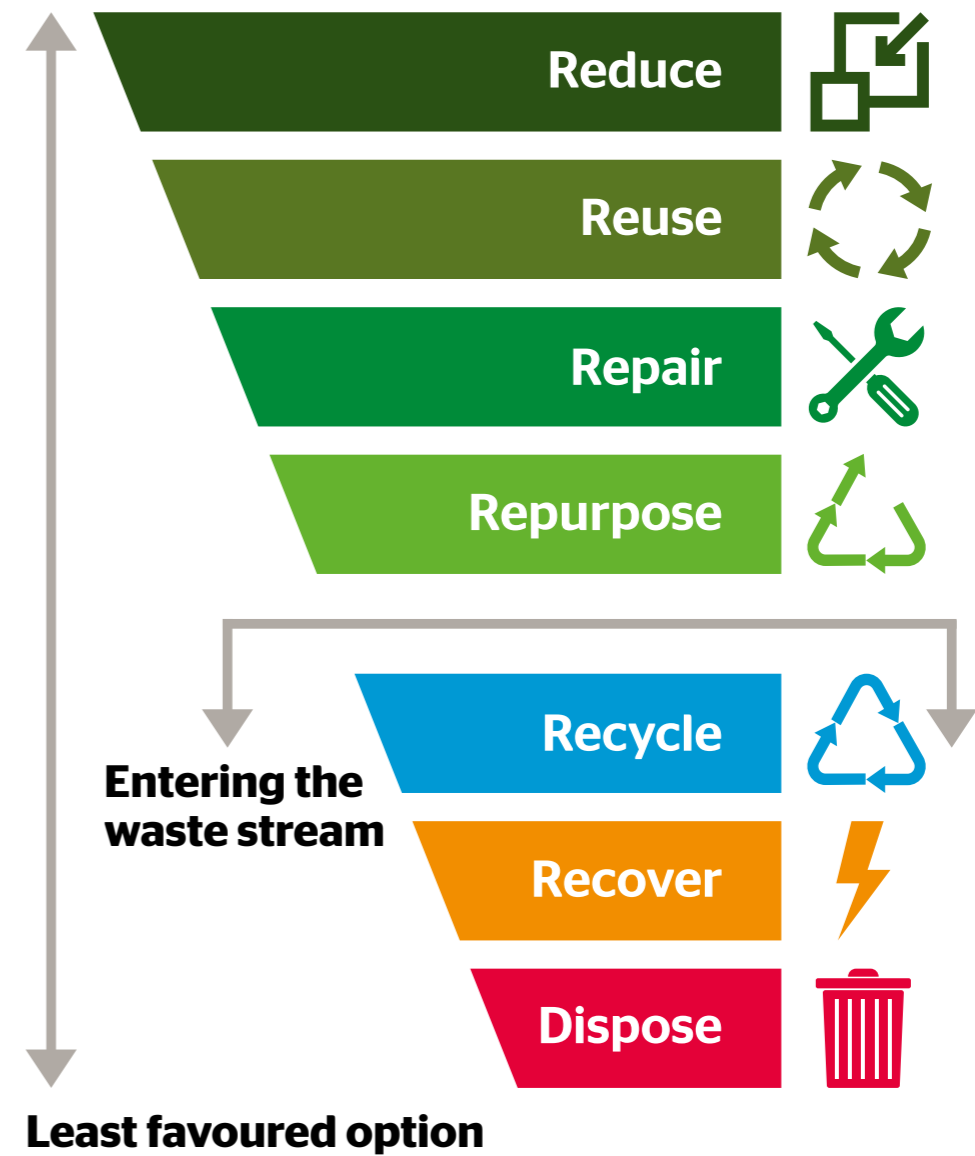


- Borough is recycling 60% of its residential waste by 2030; with an interim target of 54% by 2027
- Residential borough waste reduced by 50% by 2030, based on 2019/20
- Businesses to reduce their waste by 50% by 2030, based on 2019/20



## Waste hierarchy

Most favoured option



# Adapting to change

Meeting our carbon reduction targets and keeping global temperature rise below 1.5°C will still bring changes, like more intense rainfall and increased heat, affecting food production, ecosystems, and daily life. We must be aware of these risks and adapt to mitigate and manage them.



## Targets: Leading by example

- Corporate and service risk registers explicitly address climate change, and report on climate incidents by 2024
- All our operations and services ready for future climates (based on most up to date climate projections for the UK) by 2030
- Ensure that the council has addressed the government's 8 priority risk areas by 2025
- Ensure that information and education is available about climate change, risk and adaptations for local people and groups by 2024, and regular (at least annual) updates are sent thereafter



## Targets: People power

- Facilitate the borough to be ready for future climates by 2030
- Encourage and facilitate all housing providers and developers to provide a climate change risk register, guidance by 2025, with actions to mitigate and actions for adaptation by 2030

# Governance

The Environmental Strategy will have a delivery plan reviewed annually and updated every two years. The Environmental Strategy will be reviewed midway. It is owned by the Portfolio Holder for Sustainability and the Sustainability Board, with internal quarterly reports and annual external reports starting from 2024.





# **Watford's Environmental Strategy:**

Addressing the Climate and Ecological Emergency

2023 - 2030

**Summary**

**[www.watford.gov.uk/sustainablewatford](http://www.watford.gov.uk/sustainablewatford)**



# Watford's Environmental Strategy:

## Addressing the Climate and Ecological Emergency

### Delivery Plan 2023 - 2025



**WATFORD  
BOROUGH  
COUNCIL**

# Foreword

Watford Borough Council recognises the seriousness of the climate and ecological emergencies. That is why we have committed to being a net zero carbon town by 2030.

Climate change is already affecting communities across the world and will impact local residents, businesses and community groups here in Watford. High energy prices caused by the war in Ukraine and other global pressures have also brought home the need to move quickly to a low carbon future.

This delivery plan sets out in detail how we will meet this challenge. We have committed significant financial resources to implement this plan but will also need external funding to reach our net zero target.

To achieve our ambition, we will also need to work with others and be accountable to others. Here, we show how we will lead by example and support local residents and businesses to improve energy efficiency, reduce waste and move away from fossil fuels.

Together, we can deliver a greener, healthier and more inviting Watford for future generations.



**Peter Taylor**  
Elected Mayor of Watford



Councillor **Ian Stotesbury**  
Portfolio Holder for  
Transport and Sustainability



# Introduction

We are facing a climate and ecological emergency. Locally we can see the changing weather patterns, with more torrential rains, floods, and heat waves. Globally governments have committed to limit global temperature change to below 2°C, and ideally below 1.5°C. Locally Watford Borough Council has signed climate and ecological emergency declarations.

**There is still hope** - with effort, leadership and co-operation, we can limit our environmental impacts. The earth is our home, and we must work with nature respectfully and with reciprocity.

**The longer we leave it, the tougher and more expensive it gets - so the time to act is now.**

This delivery plan 2023-25, sets out the actions we will take over the next 2 years, across the 2 overarching themes of Leading by Example and People Power, and the 4 sustainability topics of Achieving Net Zero, Nature and Ecological Restoration, Responsible Resource Use and Adapting to Change.

Some of these measures need actions from all those in the borough, others are subject to us achieving sufficient external funding. Where this is not forthcoming, we will do our best to achieve our targets, but the approach and timescales may change.

In addition, we have existing projects that are supporting the Environmental Strategy, such as the Town Hall decarbonisation project, and the River Colne Project. These major projects will significantly contribute to us achieving our targets.


Each year the Council will report on our progress against the key targets, based on best available data. It will also report on progress in delivering the actions within the plan. The delivery plan will be reviewed annually and updated every 2 years. There will be quarterly reporting to senior management and portfolio holders.

- Net zero carbon for Council emissions (CO<sub>2</sub>equivalent) by the end of 2030
- We will report on progress of our emissions, against the 2019/20 baseline, and report on additional emissions as appropriate
- Council's own waste reduced to near zero by 2030
- We will monitor and report on the waste we generate and our recycling rates
- 30% by area of our green spaces managed to support nature by 2030
- We will report on our progress towards ensuring at least 30% by area of our green spaces are managed for nature
- Do everything in our power to achieve net zero carbon emissions (CO<sub>2e</sub>) for the borough by the end of 2030
- We will report on the borough emissions, noting that best available data give a two year lag in information available
- Do everything in our power to reduce borough waste by 50% by 2030, with recycling making up at least 60% of the waste
- We will report on our borough waste and recycling rates, working with Herts WasteAware



# Leading by example

The Council is committed to addressing the climate and ecological emergency, both within the Council and the borough. To achieve these objectives, the Council will need to work in collaboration with others as well as secure external funding. Therefore, it will both lead by example and work with others. Within this delivery plan, across the sustainability themes there are actions which will directly work towards those objectives, and there are actions the council will take to facilitate those in the borough to take actions to address the climate and ecological emergency.

Theme	Target	Interim Target	Actions	Timescale for Actions
	<b>Leading by example</b> To meet the Council Plan's Greener, Brighter Future commitments by 2026		Implement sustainability decision making approach across the council	Spring 2024
	Environmental strategy targets and associated actions embedded in all council strategies and plans as they are developed or reviewed, or by 2030 at the latest		For strategies to be updated by 2025, review Environmental Strategy Implications	Summer 2023 and Ongoing
	Councillors and all staff trained on the strategy and its impacts, climate change and the ecological emergency by 2024, and ongoing annual or biennial thereafter		Created/adapt e-learning training courses	Spring 2023
	Ensure that the Council is a leader in coordinating with stakeholders across the borough to address the climate and ecological emergencies		Host a cross borough stakeholder symposium	By Autumn 2023, and at least annually
	Ensure the Council lobbies regionally and nationally to improve ability of Watford, and the UK to meet their environmental targets		Proactive lobbying on environmental impacts affecting Watford and the climate emergency	Ongoing
	Annual reporting of key targets from 2024		Implement monitoring and reporting practice	Spring 2024
	Regular review of procurement strategy 2022-26		Annual review of sustainability targets in strategy	Spring, annually
	Ensure ESG remains a key consideration in where we invest		When tendering for Money Market Fund providers consider ESG as a key part of the tender evaluation. When Council's banking provider is next tendered, include ESG as a key part of the tender evaluation	Part of ongoing review. (Already part of Croxley Park Investment) Spring 2024
	Property investments (excluding FRI leases extending beyond 2030) to have EPC rating of B or higher by 2030	EPC rating of C or greater 1st April 2027	Property Asset review to determine baseline, actions and any other appropriate indications for good environmental investments	Spring 2025
ESG/Environmental impacts to be a key consideration in all new JV and own projects by 2025		Develop policy and guidance on requirements, this will include EPC, BREEAM and/or other certification standards	Spring 2024	

# People power

We all have a role to play and opportunity to help to create happy, healthy and thriving people, communities, and businesses. Some targets require borough-wide action, and there needs to be engagement from everyone. The key action here is to develop an approach to engaging with all sectors of our community. The targets and actions below are ambitious and will require us to secure additional external funding. If this is not successful, lower cost options will be considered, which will affect the timeframe and level of delivery.

Theme	Target	Interim Target	Actions	Timescale for Actions
People Power	10% of Watford Households signed up to Count Us In or equivalent by 2025; 25% by 2027; 50% by 2030	10% of Watford households signed up to Count Us In or equivalent by 2025	Develop portal to engage with community. This addresses all targets within People Power. Develop a strategic approach to engagement across the targets and borough	Summer 2025
	Engage with 50% of fuel poor households on how they can reduce their energy costs by 2025; 75% by 2027 and 90% by 2030	Engage with 50% of fuel poor households on how they can reduce their energy costs by 2025		Spring 2025
	50% SME and large businesses sign up to sustainable business charter by March 2025 and 75% by 2027	50% SME and large businesses sign up to sustainable business charter by March 2025	Develop sustainable business charter Promote uptake of charter or equivalent	Summer 2023 Ongoing
	25% micro businesses sign up to sustainable business pledge by March 2025 and 50% by 2027	25% micro businesses sign up to sustainable business pledge by March 2025	Develop simplified charter for micro businesses Work with partners to promote and encourage uptake	Autumn 2023 Ongoing
	Increase uptake of local climate initiatives by 10% year on year from 2024 to 2030		Support GBGW in 2023 and 2024 Develop sustainability communication and engagement plan	June 2023; June 2024 Summer 2023
	Increase by at least 10% year on year opportunities for people to be engaged with educational or voluntary activities in this area		As above	As above
	Develop a skills and employment plan, with green skills and jobs as a key strand by 2024, implementing the targets and actions thereafter		Work with local partners to develop green skills and jobs plan	Spring 2024



# Achieving net zero

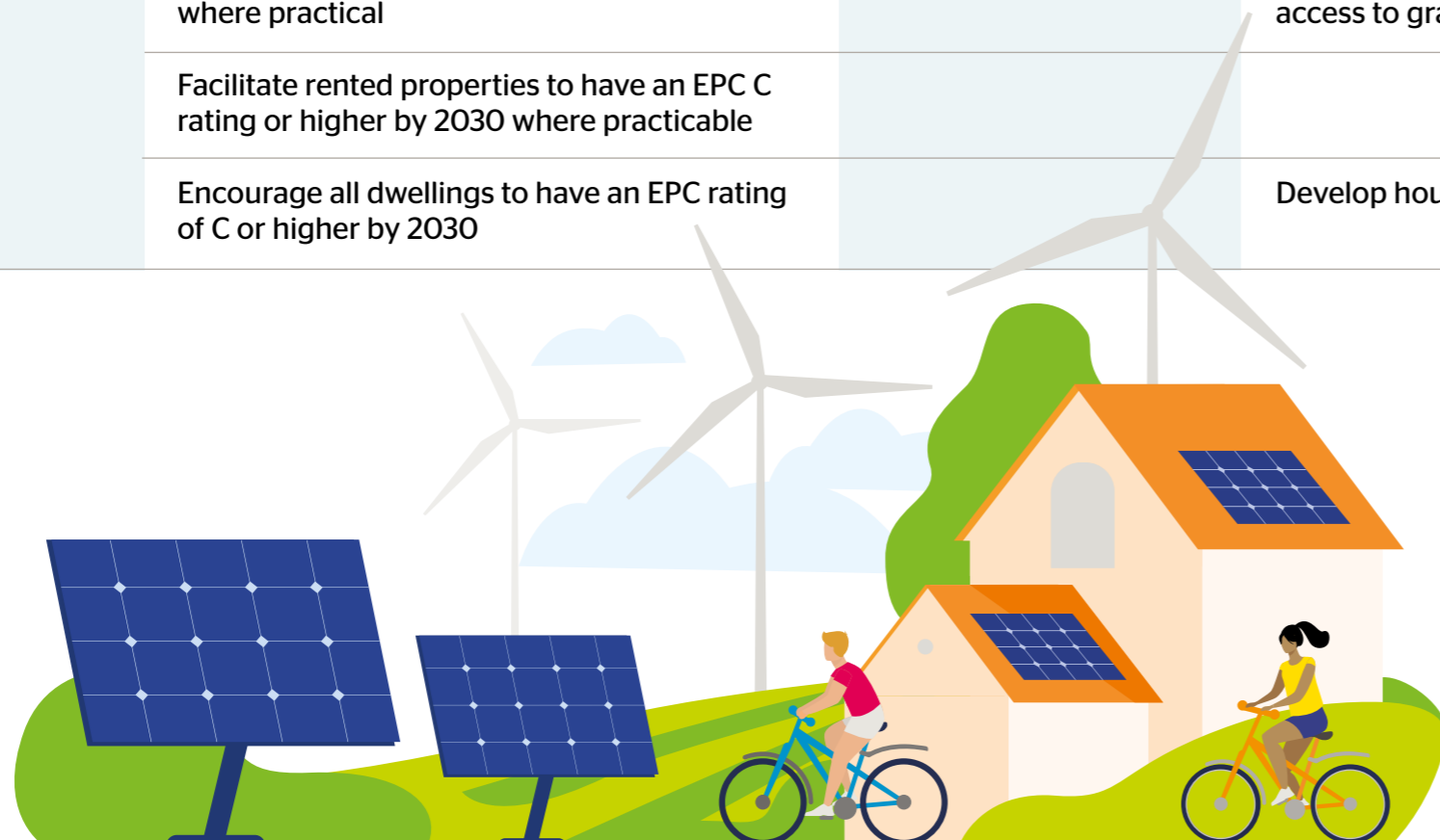
Watford Borough Council has committed to achieve net zero carbon (CO<sub>2e</sub>equivalent) in its operations by 2030 and facilitate the borough to reach net zero by the same year. Net zero means we will measure and reduce our greenhouse gas emissions (direct and indirect) as much as we can, and offset any remaining. We have a baseline of emissions for 2019/20, and our reductions are based on this, we are also intending to go beyond the scope in the baseline to further address our emissions. These will be reported separately. To achieve a net zero carbon borough, government funding is required, as well as money spent by businesses, groups and individuals. The council will act as a facilitator where it can.

Theme	Target	Interim Target	Actions	Timescale for Actions
<b>Achieving Net Zero - Council</b>	To achieve net zero by 2030 for the Council emissions it is proposed to have a stepped increase in emissions reduction	22% reduction in CO <sub>2e</sub> emissions and 6% offsetting	Overarching target: Specific actions are detailed below	
	Council business travel to transition to net zero by 2030, with the following interim reductions: 2025 - 50% reduction; 2027 - 75% reduction	Council business travel reduction by 50% by 2025		
	Staff travel and home working to transition to net zero by 2030, with the following interim reductions: 2025 - 25% reduction; 2027 - 50% reduction; 2029 - 75% reduction	25% reduction by 2025	Staff travel and home working survey Staff travel and home working plan	Summer 2023 Winter 2023/24
	Council services transport fleet to transition to net zero by 2030, with the following interim reductions: 2025 - 25% reduction; 2027 - 50% reduction; 2029 - 75% reduction	25% reduction by 2025	Produce fleet policy and strategy	Summer 2024
	Council buildings net zero by 2030 - i.e. scope 1 and 2 for our buildings	22% reduction by 2025	Implement initial actions in APSE carbon reduction report Community asset review and action plan	Spring 2025 Summer 2024



# Achieving net zero

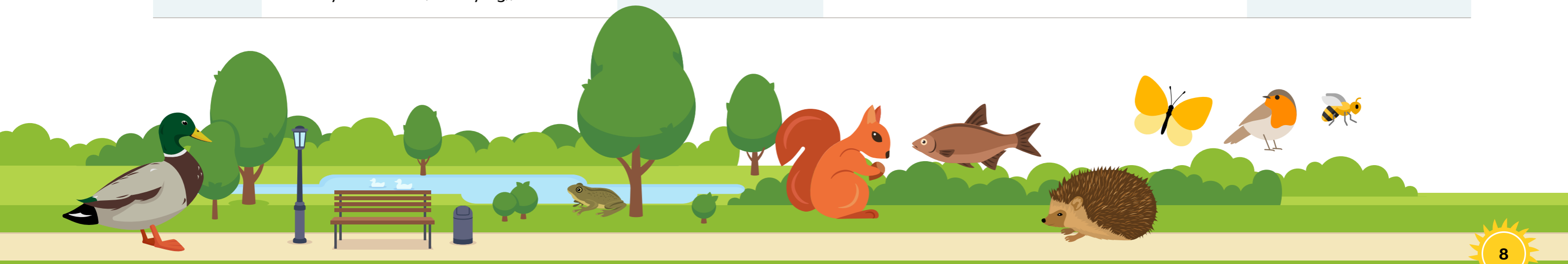
Theme	Target	Interim Target	Actions	Timescale for Actions
Achieving Net Zero - Borough	To achieve net zero by 2030 for the Borough emissions		Overarching target: Specific actions are detailed below	
	Modal shift away from private cars - Public transport shift from 11.5% to 15%; cycle modal shift from 2.5% to 7% and walking modal shift from 28% to 34% by 2030		Implement Transforming Travel In Watford strategy	
	Encouraging and facilitate developers to build all new buildings to net zero standards by 2030		Develop design codes and guidance on sustainable design and construction	Spring 2025
	Encourage and facilitate existing building owners to review their buildings for energy efficiency improvements, and implemented where practical by 2030		Lobby government on grants and apply for funding to support this	Ongoing
	Facilitate the means for all fuel poor dwellings to have an EPC rating of C or higher by 2030 where practical		Develop housing retrofit improvement strategy. Continue to work with partners to ensure residents have access to grant funding	Spring 2025 Ongoing
	Facilitate rented properties to have an EPC C rating or higher by 2030 where practicable			
	Encourage all dwellings to have an EPC rating of C or higher by 2030			Develop housing improvement strategy and action plan



# Nature and ecological restoration

The UK is one of the least biodiverse nations and ranks low globally for biodiversity intactness. This is especially true in southeast England, where we also have rare chalk streams. Watford, a water-stressed area with high water usage, faces issues with nature, water, pollution, and food security. However, Watford has made good progress in managing its parks and green spaces, achieving 17 green flags in 2022. It has also been successful in its tree planting and giveaways.

Theme	Target	Interim Target	Actions	Timescale for Actions
Nature and ecological restoration - Council	30% by area of our green spaces managed to support nature by 2030; 20% by 2025	20% by 2025	Develop and begin implementing Biodiversity Strategy. Continue programme of investment and improvement in Watford parks	Summer 2024 Ongoing
	30% by area of our corporate estate green spaces managed to support nature by 2030; 10% by 2025	10% by 2025		
	Council to ensure separate water monitoring for council activities by 2025		Implement water monitoring programme	Spring 2024
	Council to achieve water usage of 12 l/employee/day by 2030 for office based activities. An interim target for 2027 will be set in 2025		Develop water management strategy	Spring 2025
	Ensure sports facilities, trees and amenity planting are primarily irrigated by rainwater where practicable by 2030		Develop water management strategy with Veolia	Spring 2024
	For the council to meet the International Dark-Sky Associations 'Five Principles for Responsible Outdoor Lighting' across all council-operated properties by 2025 (Five Principles for Responsible Outdoor Lighting - International Dark-Sky Association (darksky.org))		Implement Dark-Sky external lighting protocol	Autumn 2023





# Nature and ecological restoration



Theme	Target	Interim Target	Actions	Timescale for Actions
Nature and ecological restoration - Borough	Biodiversity net gain of 10% or greater for all new development, with any offsetting occurring within the borough or adjoining boroughs/districts by 2030		SPD on Biodiversity Net Gain	Summer 2024
	Minimum canopy target 25% by 2030; interim target of 20% by 2027	20,000 trees by 2026	Work with our community to plant 20,000 trees across the borough	2026
	Work with partners to facilitate Rivers Colne and Gade in the borough meeting the Water Framework Directive (WFD) good standard for biodiversity and at least moderate for chemical water quality by 2030	2.2km of River Colne in the borough improved by Autumn 2024	River Colne Project Cassiobury Wetland Project	
	Maintain or improve access to private outdoor amenity space (e.g. gardens, balconies you can go out on, private communal spaces)		Develop design codes and guidance on sustainable design and construction	
	Maintain or improve the green space per capita and distance from green space and improve where practical		Develop and implement Green Spaces Strategy	Summer 2024 and ongoing
	Support residents to achieve an annual average residential use of 110 l/p/d by 2030; interim targets of 145 l/p/d by 2025 and 130 l/p/d by 2027	145 l/p/d by 2025	Work with partners to support residents reducing water usage	Ongoing
	All Watford to meet national Air Quality Objectives and Air Quality Standards Regulations		Develop and implement local air quality strategy	Spring 2025
	60% of waste food collected to be recycled 2030; with interim targets of 50% by 2027	50% by 2027	Work with partners to reduce food waste Work to ensure food waste is collected separately for recycling	Ongoing
	Improve the ability of those in the borough to grow food, year on year		Working with partners provide information, support and opportunity for food growing Review opportunity for Incredible Edible type project in borough	Ongoing Summer 2024
	All WBC café/concession operators to have in place an approach to include plant based options and provide information on the carbon implications of food choices on the menu by 2030, or as soon as the contract is up for renewal (whichever is sooner); this to be a requirement for all new operators by 2023	All new operators to have in place approach to include plant based options and carbon implications by 2023	Ensure appropriate clauses are put in tender and contracts for WBC café/concessions	Autumn 2023

# Responsible resource use

A key part of our environmental impact comes from what we consume, such as fashion, technology, food, and leisure activities. This section focuses on non-food consumption, using the waste hierarchy, and promoting a circular economy. To achieve many of these targets will require residents and businesses to make a change in how they buy, consume and dispose of items.

Theme	Target	Interim Target	Actions	Timescale for Actions
Responsible Resource Use - Council	Council-generated waste reduced to as near zero as practicable by 2030		Monitor waste generated by council Initiate waste reduction strategies and initiatives to engage with staff, such as clothes swaps	Summer 2023 Summer 2023 and Ongoing
	Ensure the Council is recycling 60% of its own waste by 2025 and 70% by 2028	60% of council waste recycled by 2025	Monitoring of waste and recycling Staff awareness initiatives	Summer 2023 Ongoing
Responsible Resource Use - Borough	Borough is recycling 60% of its residential waste by 2030; with an interim target of 54% by 2027	54% by 2027	Work with Herts WasteAware to encourage recycling	Ongoing
	Residential borough waste reduced by 50% by 2030, based on 2019/20		Action plan to encourage alternative approaches to waste, e.g. through charity shop trail, repair fairs/shop, resilience hub	Spring 2025
	Businesses to reduce their waste by 50% by 2030, based on 2019/20		Work with partners to support businesses reduce their waste and increase their recycling rates	Ongoing

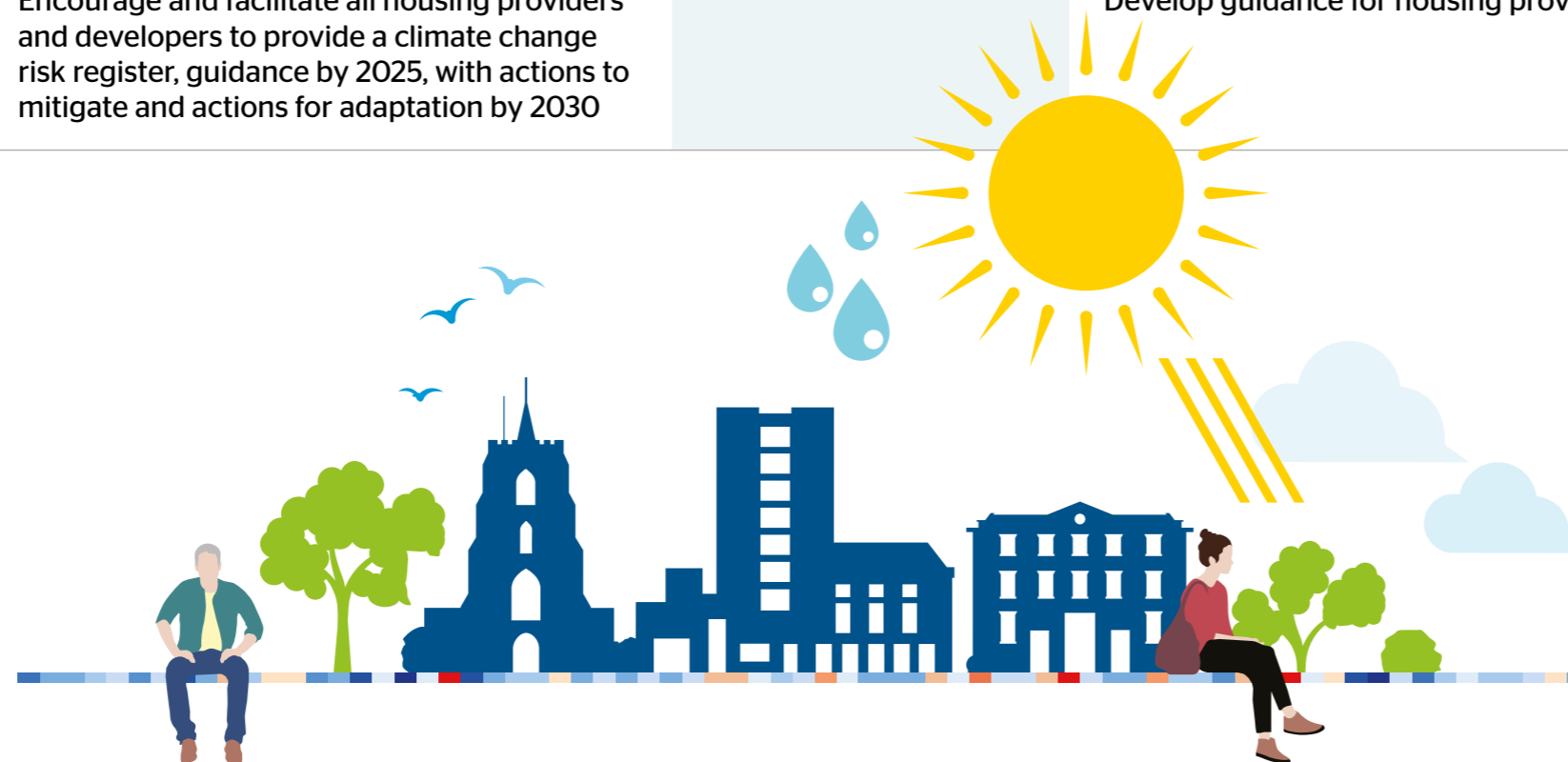
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# Adapting to change

Meeting our carbon reduction targets and keeping global temperature rise below 1.5°C will still bring changes, like more intense rainfall and increased heat, affecting food production, ecosystems, and daily life. We must be aware of these risks and adapt to mitigate and manage them.

Theme	Target	Interim Target	Actions	Timescale for Actions
Adapting to Change	Corporate and service risk registers explicitly address climate change, and report on climate incidents by 2024		Provide training to senior officers Implement Local Partnerships toolkit	Autumn 2023 Winter 2023
	All our operations and services ready for future climates (based on most up to date climate projections for the UK) by 2030		Actively engage with external partners such as Water company, Environment Agency etc. on climate risks, mitigation and adaptation	Ongoing
	Ensure that the Council has addressed the Government's 8 priority risk areas by 2025		Review risk areas, identify actions and incorporate into service plans	Spring 2025
	Ensure that information and education is available about climate change, risk and adaptations for local people and groups by 2024, and regular (at least annual) updates are sent thereafter		Develop information pack on climate risk and adaptation for local people and groups	Spring 2024
	Facilitate the Borough to be ready for future climates by 2030			
	Encourage and facilitate all housing providers and developers to provide a climate change risk register, guidance by 2025, with actions to mitigate and actions for adaptation by 2030			Develop guidance for housing providers and developers





# **Watford's Environmental Strategy:**

Addressing the Climate and Ecological Emergency

**Delivery Plan 2023 - 2025**

**[www.watford.gov.uk/sustainablewatford](http://www.watford.gov.uk/sustainablewatford)**



**WATFORD  
BOROUGH  
COUNCIL**

# Equality Impact Analysis

<b>Title of policy, function or service</b>	Watford’s Environmental Strategy: addressing the climate and ecological emergency 2023-2030  Associated delivery plan 2023-2025
<b>Lead officer</b>	Susheel Rao, Sustainability Officer
<b>Person completing the EIA</b>	Susheel Rao, Sustainability Officer
<b>Type of policy, function or service:</b>	Existing (reviewed) <input type="checkbox"/>  New/Proposed                    x <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<b>Version &amp; Date</b>	Version 1  21/2/23

## **1. Background**

The council declared a climate emergency in 2019 and an ecological emergency in 2021. It has committed to achieve net zero carbon for the council by 2030 and do all in its power to achieve net zero for the borough also by 2030.

In 2020 the council approved the Sustainability Strategy Part 1, which runs until March 2023. Watford's Environmental Strategy: addressing the climate and ecological emergency will run from 2023 to 2030. Alongside this, there will be a deliver plan which is reviewed annually and updated every 2 years. The proposed delivery plan will run from April 2023 to March 2025.

Watford's Environmental Strategy has been developed with liaison between both internal and external parties. A consultation exercise was held between 7<sup>th</sup> November 2022 and 9<sup>th</sup> December 2022. This included face to face focus groups, virtual meetings and an online consultation questionnaire. As part of the focus group meetings we contacted organisations working with people from a range of different interest groups, from disability, to religion to race. While not successful in getting a response and chance to meet with them, we did hold sessions with Watford deaf club, and the blind society, as well as sessions with West Herts College and Westfield Academy.

The impacts of climate change, mitigation and adaptation solutions can have a greater impact on disadvantaged people, either within Watford or globally. Climate justice is an internationally recognised issue, which we all need to address. The strategy is seeking to mitigate the impacts of climate change, through reducing the carbon equivalent impacts both within the council and across the borough, seeking to help those who are experiencing fuel poverty, ensuring we have adequate natural habitat areas, providing benefit for nature, and also for those without access to their own private gardens, and reducing the resources we use, such as making it easier and more acceptable to reuse and repair things.

The strategy sets out the council's targets to be achieved by 2030, while the delivery plan sets out the actions to be taken in the next two years.

## **2. Focus of the Equality Impact Analysis**

This EIA, therefore, considers the potential equality related impacts, both positive and negative of Watford's Environmental Strategy and Delivery Plan on the people in the groups or with the characteristics protected in the Equalities Act 2010.

These are:

1. Age
2. Disability
3. Gender Reassignment
4. Pregnancy and maternity
5. Race
6. Religion or belief
7. Sex (gender)

8. Sexual Orientation
9. Marriage and Civil Partnership.

### **3. Engagement and consultation**

**RESPONDENTS' PROFILE SHOULD BE INCLUDED HERE AND WHAT YOU HAVE LEARNT FROM ENGAGING AND CONSULTING WITH THE COMMUNITY.**

**Speak to Head of Corporate Strategy and Communications for advice on engagement and consultation to be undertaken to support your EIA. For some cases demonstrating that you have engaged / consulted is critical to developing an effective and robust EIA that meets legal requirements.**

To ensure we provided opportunity for the greatest amount of people to provide their feedback on the Environmental Strategy, we took the following approach:

- Consultation on CommonPlace, with copies of the strategy, both in full and in chapters there.
- In person or virtual focus groups or meetings.
- Snap Survey
- Social media posts
- Having people at the Green Market and also in CSC to ask people's views.

We promoted the consultation through:

- 16 digital posters on the Watford High Street;
- Feature article in About Watford Winter edition 2022;
- Social media campaign;
- Articles in WBC's email newsletter for residents;
- Article in Elected Mayor's email newsletter
- Article in the Economic Development newsletter
- Direct emails and sharing requests to 19 organisations and our sustainability mailing list of 700 people;
- 12 focus groups.

We had face to face meetings where we engaged with 238 people, these included:

- Watford Blind Centre (12)
- Watford Deaf Association (10)
- Sustainability Managers (15)
- Sustainability Forum (35)
- GBGW attendees (35)
- Facebook Live (15)
- Water Quality Forum (42)
- Session with W3R FoE (10)
- Meeting with BID (2)
- Lunch & Learn with staff (18)
- West Herts College (25)

- Westfield school: (13)
- Watford Football Club: (2)
- Face-face interviews at CSC (4)

Through this process, we engaged with people of different ethnicity, gender, and age, as well as with people who had a recognised disability.

#### 4. What we know about the Watford population

##### UP TO DATE INFORMATION ON WATFORD'S POPULATION AND PROFILE

Speak to Head of Corporate Strategy and Communications for advice on this area and for relevant up to date information.

#### 5. How will the council ensure equality is promoted through Watford's Environmental Strategy

Under the Equality Act 2010, three areas need to be considered when analysing the equality impact of Watford's Environmental Strategy:

1. **eliminate** discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under the Act
2. **advance** equality of opportunity between people who share a relevant protected characteristic and people who do not share it
3. **foster** good relations between people who share a relevant protected characteristic and people who do not

#### A. Positive impacts

Implementing the strategy should have a long term benefit to all, especially the disadvantaged and those on low income as it will help to:

- mitigate against energy and resource cost rises;
- reduce pollution and congestion;
- provide access to nature as well as green space;
- prepare the borough for changes resulting for climate change.



## **B. Negative impacts**

The potential negative impacts relate to costs of implementing changes, whether for individuals, within the council or within the borough.

Other negative impacts relate to perceptions that some things are now off limits, without an alternative.

## **6. Overall conclusion**

Overall, Watford's Environmental Strategy should have a positive impact across all the protected characteristics, although short term there may be some negative impacts or perceived negative impacts, especially as we will all need to make changes in how we do things. Climate change and ecological destruction across the globe will affect all of us, and is starting to already. It is likely to affect those who are disadvantaged more, whether in the UK or globally. Therefore taking action to limit, mitigate and adapt to this will have a positive impact, both short and long term.

## Summary of potential positive impacts and ways in which they can be ensured

Positive Impact	Protected characteristics	Ways to ensure the positive impact
Reduced money spent on energy, water and other resources.	Age, disability, ethnicity, belief, gender	Work with fuel poor to facilitate better energy efficiency in homes; Work with partners to promote ways to safely reduce energy, water and other resource bills, with low cost measures. E.g. water saving devices, draught proofing, etc.
Improved air quality and reduced pollution and congestion	Potentially all, but specifically Age, disability, ethnicity, belief, gender	Ensure that TTIW actions recognise the implications to certain groups, such as those with disabilities
Improved access to nature	Potentially all, but specifically Age, disability, ethnicity, belief, gender	Ensure that when managing for nature, there are still areas which are also accessible for people, such that they can experience nature positively within Watford.
Ensure we are prepared for changes in weather patterns due to increase in average global temperature, e.g. due to flooding, extreme heat, drought and cost of heating homes	Potentially all, but specifically Age, disability, ethnicity, belief, gender	Ensure that where individual homes or work places cannot be adapted there are accessible alternatives Look at how urban heat island effect can be mitigated in dense urban areas.

## Summary of potential negative impacts and ways in which they can be removed or mitigated

Negative Impact	Protected characteristics	Ways to mitigate the negative impact
Cost of implementing measures	Potentially all, but specifically Age, disability, ethnicity, belief, gender	Look for grant funding for cash poor and fuel poor households to implement measures.
Actions seen as anti car, and so those who need a car discriminated against.	disability	<p>Ensure that dialogue on moving away from cars and towards active travel reflects diverse population;</p> <p>Ensure that active travel options are safe for the wide range of users, and minimise conflict between different users;</p> <p>Ensure alternatives to the car outside active travel are also discussed, such as public transport, but also use of cars through a car club.</p>

**This EIA has been approved by:**

..... **Date** .....



**WATFORD  
BOROUGH  
COUNCIL**

# Equality Impact Analysis

<b>Title of policy, function or service</b>	Watford’s Environmental Strategy: addressing the climate and ecological emergency 2023-2030  Associated delivery plan 2023-2025
<b>Lead officer</b>	Susheel Rao, Sustainability Officer
<b>Person completing the EIA</b>	Susheel Rao, Sustainability Officer
<b>Type of policy, function or service:</b>	Existing (reviewed) <input type="checkbox"/>  New/Proposed x <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<b>Version &amp; Date</b>	Version 2  21/2/23

## **1. Background**

The council declared a climate emergency in 2019 and an ecological emergency in 2021. It has committed to achieve net zero carbon for the council by 2030 and do all in its power to achieve net zero for the borough also by 2030.

In 2020 the council approved the Sustainability Strategy Part 1, which runs until March 2023. Watford's Environmental Strategy: addressing the climate and ecological emergency will run from 2023 to 2030. Alongside this, there will be a deliver plan which is reviewed annually and updated every 2 years. The proposed delivery plan will run from April 2023 to Mar 2025.

Watford's Environmental Strategy has been developed with liaison between both internal and external parties. A consultation exercise was held between 7<sup>th</sup> November 2022 and 9<sup>th</sup> December 2022. This included face to face focus groups, virtual meetings and an online consultation questionnaire. As part of the focus group meetings, we contacted organisations working with people from arrange of different interest groups, including those with protected characteristics, from disability, to religion to race. We were able to meet with Watford deaf club, and the blind society, as well as West Herts College and Westfield Academy.

The impacts of climate change, mitigation and adaptation solutions can have a greater impact on more vulnerable people, either within Watford or globally. Climate justice is an internationally recognised issue, which we all need to address. The strategy is seeking to mitigate the impacts of climate change, through reducing the carbon equivalent impacts both within the council and across the borough, seeking to help those who are experiencing fuel poverty, ensuring we have adequate natural habitat areas, providing benefit for nature, and also for those without access to their own private gardens, and reducing the resources we use, such as making it easier and more acceptable to reuse and repair things.

The strategy sets out the council's targets to be achieved by 2030, while the delivery plan sets out the actions to be taken in the next two years.

## **2. Focus of the Equality Impact Analysis**

This EIA, therefore, considers the potential equality related impacts, both positive and negative of Watford's Environmental Strategy and Delivery Plan on the people in the groups or with the characteristics protected in the Equalities Act 2010.

These are:

1. Age
2. Disability
3. Gender Reassignment
4. Pregnancy and maternity
5. Race
6. Religion or belief
7. Sex (gender)

8. Sexual Orientation
9. Marriage and Civil Partnership.

### **3. Engagement and consultation**

To ensure we provided opportunity for the greatest amount of people to provide their feedback on the Environmental Strategy, we took the following approach:

- Consultation on CommonPlace, with copies of the strategy, both in full and in chapters posted online;
- In person or virtual focus groups or meetings;
- Snap Survey
- Social media posts
- Having people at the Green Market and also in the council's Customer Service Centre to ask people's views.

We promoted the consultation through:

- 16 digital posters on the Watford High Street;
- Feature article in About Watford Winter edition 2022;
- Social media campaign;
- Articles in WBC's email newsletter for residents;
- Article in Elected Mayor's email newsletter
- Article in the Economic Development newsletter
- Direct emails and sharing requests to 19 organisations and our sustainability mailing list of 700 people;
- 12 focus groups.

We had face to face meetings where we engaged with 238 people, these included:

- Watford Blind Centre (12)
- Watford Deaf Association (10)
- Sustainability Managers (15)
- Sustainability Forum (35)
- Great Big Green Week attendees (35)
- Facebook Live (15)
- Water Quality Forum (42)
- Session with W3R Friends of the Earth (10)
- Meeting with Watford BID (2)
- Lunch & Learn with staff (18)
- West Herts College (25)
- Westfield school: (13)
- Watford Football Club: (2)
- Face-face interviews at CSC (4)

Through this process, we engaged with people of different ethnicity, gender, and age, as well as with people who had a recognised disability.

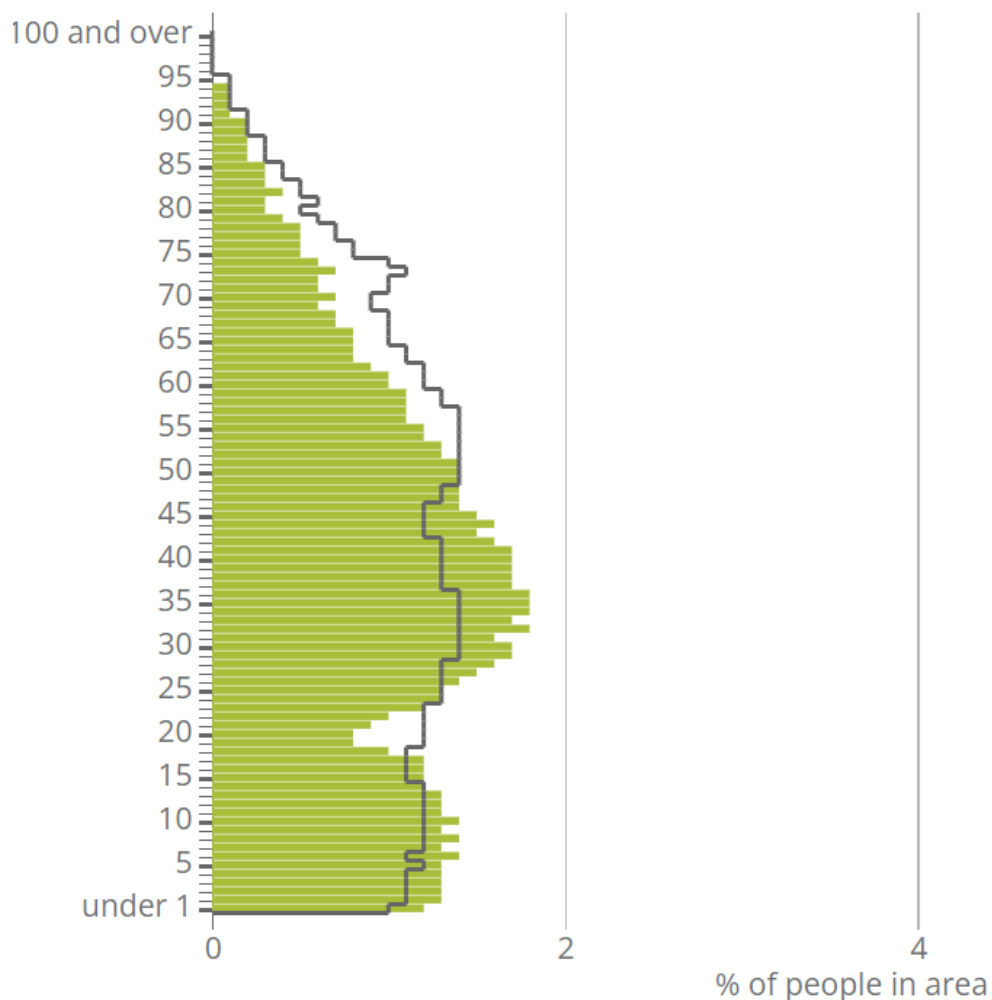
## 4. What we know about the Watford population

### Population (including age)

Watford is a town with a growing population. The census data 2021 indicates that Watford has a population of 102,300, an increase of 13.3% since the previous census in 2011. This is higher than the overall increase for England (6.6%), where the population grew by nearly 3.5 million to 56,489,800.

Watford's population is currently projected to increase to 110,300 by 2035, a rise from 2016 of 14.2%. This growth will be a challenge for Watford, given our tight borough boundaries and is recognised within the Council Plan, shaping a number of our commitments and areas for action in the Delivery Plan.

The chart below shows Watford's age ranges between 0 – 100 and over in percentage of the population (green) compared with the England / Wales percentages (black line).



Overall, this comparison shows that Watford is a relatively young town. This is particularly the case in the 0 to 19 age range. Similarly the 30 to 49 cohort accounts for a significantly higher proportion of the Watford population than nationally.

The median age in Watford is 36 compared with 40 for England.



This means that we are a town which is popular with families and, whilst we are a town for all, we recognise that our plans need to reflect our large number of young people and families. In terms of voluntary and community sector organisations, this means there are likely to be demands for help across all age profiles but those supporting families and younger children may face higher than average demand.

### Population density

The population density for Watford is circa 4,770 people per square kilometre. This makes it the most densely populated district area in Hertfordshire and in the country (434 per square kilometre). This is a reflection that we are an urban district, with many characteristics of a metropolitan borough. In comparison with many metropolitan boroughs, particularly those in and around the outskirts of London, our density is relatively low.

### Ward level populations (mid-year 2018)

The ONS publishes experimental data on ward level populations. The last release date was for mid-year 2018. This showed Central ward had the highest population (9,447) and Tudor the lowest (6,825). Further analysis shows that Nascot ward had a significantly higher number of elderly residents than other wards in Watford, whilst Central a significantly higher number of under 20s. The age profile of Nascot ward was recently highlighted by the COVID-19 crisis, when it experienced the highest death rate of any ward in Watford.

Ward	Mid-year 2018
Callowland	7,928
Central	9,447
Holywell	8,610
Leggatts	7,757
Meriden	7,972
Nascot	8,815

Ward	Mid-year 2018
Oxhey	6,847
Park	8,698
Stanborough	7,403
Tudor	6,825
Vicarage	8,854
Woodside	7,611

*ONS experimental data (Ward Level Mid-Year Population Estimates (experimental), Mid-2018)*

### Households

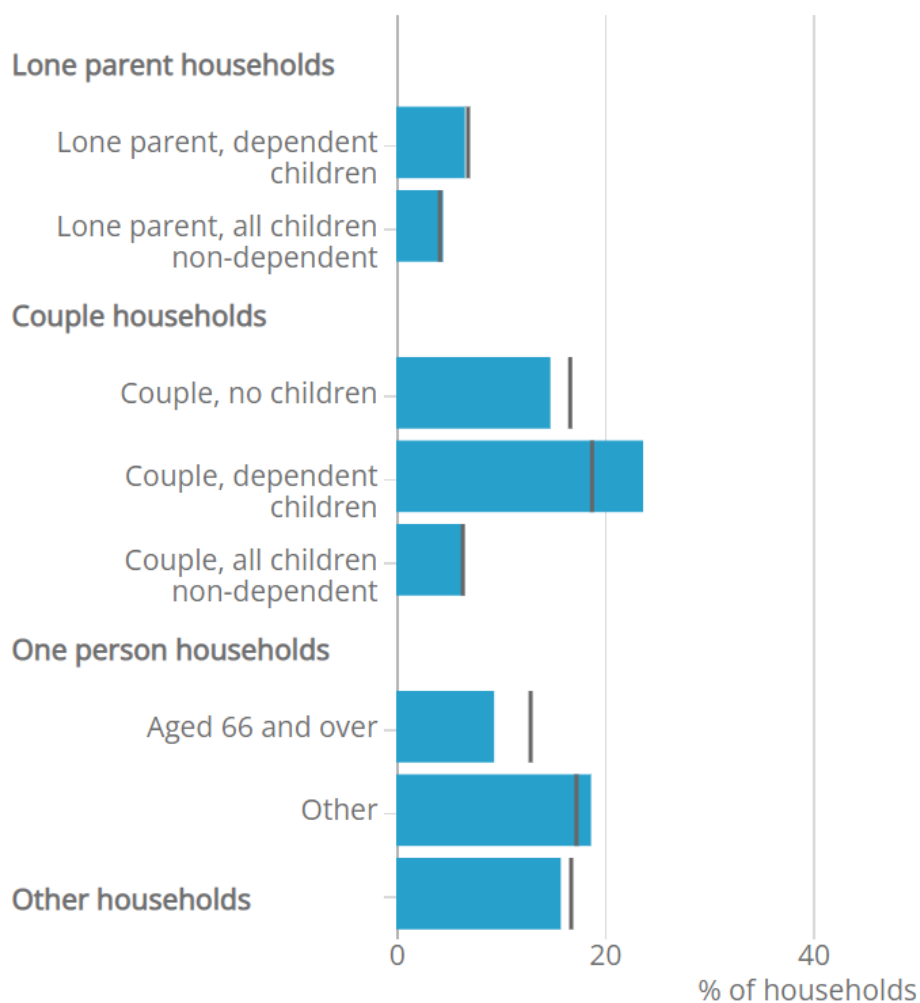
Number of households

The ONS data, based on the census, says that there were 39,628 households in Watford at the time of the Census. The average household size in Watford is currently 2.57. This is slightly higher than the national average of 2.45 and is in line with the Census 2021 household composition data below.

### Household Composition

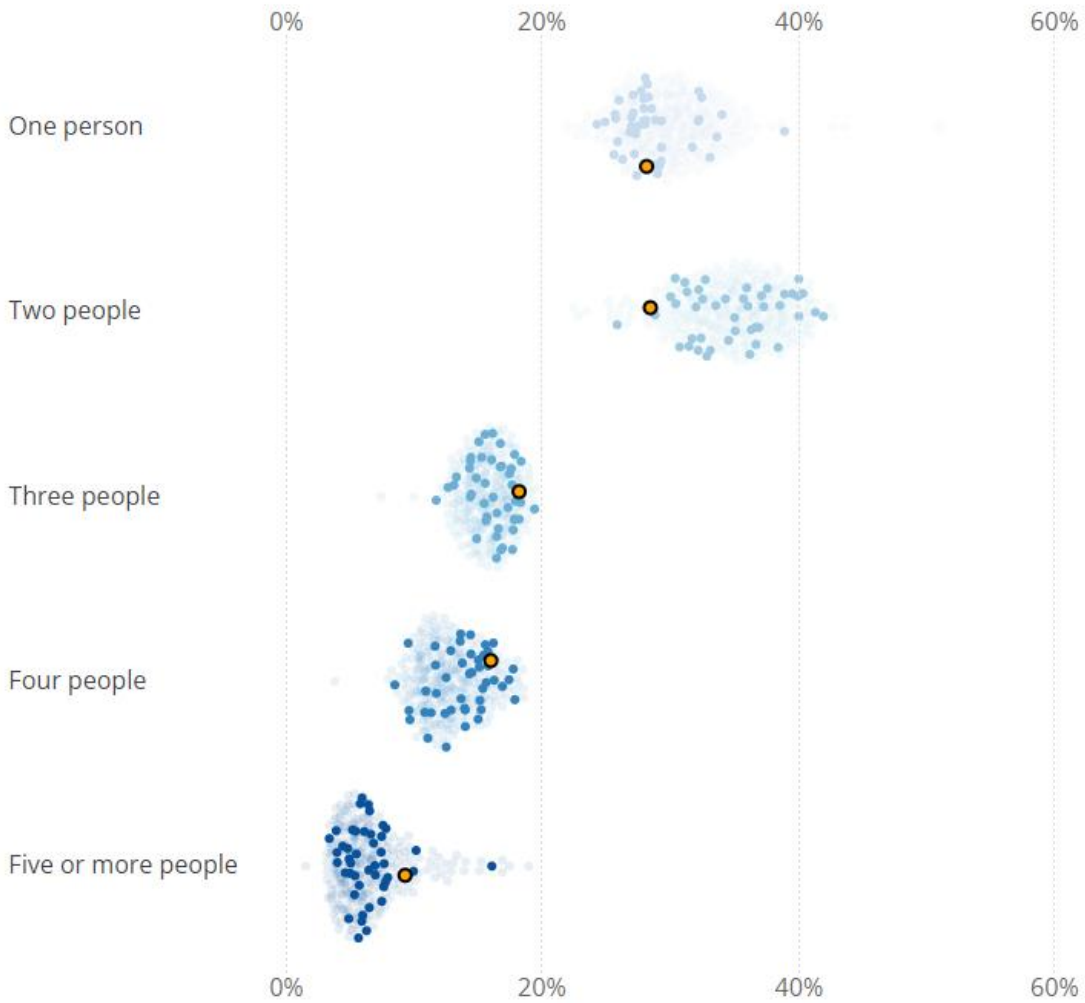
The chart below sets out the composition of Watford households in the Census 2021, with Watford's percentage shown in the blue bars compared to the England and Wales percentages shown by the vertical black bar. Watford has a higher percentage of both households with couples with no children and households with dependent children than England and Wales. As a town with a

relatively young population it has fewer one person households with residents aged 66 and over.



The second chart on household composition shows that Watford has higher than England and Wales average for larger sized households – 3 or more people. Again this reflects that Watford is a ‘family town’ with different generations living together in one household.

Local authorities within the same region are highlighted



**Language spoken at home:**

Below is the data collected in Census 2021 with regard to household language. This is another indication that Watford benefits from groups and organisations set up to support those who may have arrived in the town more recently.

	Number	Percentage
All adults in household have English as a main language	30443	76.8%
At least one but not all adults in household have English as a main language	3486	8.8%
No adults in household, but at least one person aged 3 to 15 years, has English as a main language	1438	3.6%
No people in household have English in England as a main language	4261	10.8%

### **Main Language**

The Census asked people their main language, with over 90 choices. Whilst English was significantly the most chosen language with nearly 80,000 residents citing English as their main language, there are a substantial number of residents with other main languages. The top ten after English are below (see Appendix 1 for the full list of languages).

<b>Language</b>	<b>Number</b>
Other European language (EU): Romanian	3,361
Other European language (EU): Polish	1,659
South Asian language: Urdu	1,486
South Asian language: Tamil	1,193
Portuguese	1,140
South Asian language: Gujarati	954
South Asian language: Malayalam	643
Other European language (EU): Italian	551
Other European language (EU): Hungarian	489
Other European language (EU): Bulgarian	435

### **Disability/Health**

The health and disability data from Census 2021 is not available until later in January 2023.

The 2020/21 NHS Health Profile's summary conclusion is that the health of people in Watford is 'varied' compared with the England average. About 12% (2,256) of children live in relatively low income families and about 10% live in absolute low income families.

### **Sexual orientation and gender reassignment**

Watford has no specific data on the transgender community within the borough or for the sexual orientation of its community. The information on sexual orientation is due to be released later in January 2023

### **Ethnicity**

Watford has a very diverse population, more so than the rest of Hertfordshire; it is one of the strengths of our town and what makes us such a vibrant and diverse place to be. This diversity is an opportunity for our voluntary and community sector in terms of how they respond to the various needs of the Watford community and how they reach out to engage and include people in what they do.

	WATFORD 2011	WATFORD 2021
		<b>102,245 TOTAL</b>
<b>White: English/Welsh/Scottish/Northern Irish/British</b>	61.9% (55,875)	46.0% (46,820)
<b>White Irish</b>	2.3% (2,063)	2.1% (2,149)
<b>White: Gypsy or Irish Traveller</b>	0.1% (61)	0.1% (80)
<b>White: Roma</b>	Not a category in 2011	0.3% (343)
<b>White: Other White</b>	7.7% (6,947)	12.6% (12,836)
<b>Mixed or Multiple ethnic groups: White and Black Caribbean</b>	1.1% (990)	1.3% (1,300)
<b>Mixed or Multiple ethnic groups: White and Black African</b>	0.5% (412)	0.7% (692)
<b>Mixed or Multiple ethnic groups: White and Asian</b>	1.0% (939)	1.4% (1,408)
<b>Mixed or Multiple ethnic groups: Other Mixed or Multiple ethnic groups</b>	0.8% (763)	1.4% (1,444)
<b>Asian/Asian British/ Asian Welsh: Indian</b>	5.5% (4,923)	9.7% (9,954)
<b>Asian/Asian British/Asian Welsh: Pakistani</b>	6.7% (6,082)	8.0% (8,197)
<b>Asian/Asian British/Asian Welsh: Bangladeshi</b>	0.4% (362)	0.5% (493)

<b>Asian/Asian British/Asian Welsh: Chinese</b>	0.9% (822)	1.0% (1,024)
<b>Asian/Asian British/Asian Welsh: Other Asian</b>	4.4% (3,981)	5.3% (5,369)
<b>Black, Black British, Black Welsh, Caribbean or African: African</b>	3.5% (3,142)	3.9% (3,954)
<b>Black, Black British, Black Welsh, Caribbean or African: Caribbean</b>	1.7% (1,558)	1.7% (1,733)
<b>Black, Black British, Black Welsh, Caribbean or African: Other Black</b>	0.6% (529)	0.8% (801)
<b>Other ethnic group: Arab</b>	0.3% (294)	0.7% (763)
<b>Other ethnic group: Any other ethnic group</b>	0.6% (558)	2.8% (2,885)

### Religion or belief

Religious groups in Watford, 202q census:

- Christian - 45,447 people or 44.6%
- Buddhist - 1,021 people or 0.85%
- Hindu - 8,398 people or 8.2%
- Jewish - 944 people or 0.93%
- Muslim - 13,262 people or 11.0%
- Sikh - 664 people or 0.6%
- Other - 859 people or 0.71%
- No religion – 25,340 people or 24.8%

6,311 people did not answer this question

## Gender

The 2021 census did not allow for any option other than female or male.

FEMALE	50.8%
MALE	49.2%

## Marriage and Civil Partnership

For census 2021, this has been updated to reflect the revised Civil Partnership Act that came into force in 2019.

Category	Number of Watford households
Does not apply <i>not eligible for a legal partnership</i>	21,282
Never married and never registered a civil partnership	30,974
Married: Opposite sex	38,023
Married: Same sex	192
In a registered civil partnership: Opposite sex	85
In a registered civil partnership: Same sex	60
Separated, but still married	1,744
Separated, but still in a registered civil partnership	7
Divorced	6,074
Formerly in a civil partnership now legally dissolved	18
Widowed	3,782
Surviving partner from civil partnership	5

## 5. How will the council ensure equality is promoted through Watford's Environmental Strategy

Under the Equality Act 2010, three areas need to be considered when analysing the equality impact of Watford's Environmental Strategy:

1. **eliminate** discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under the Act
2. **advance** equality of opportunity between people who share a relevant protected characteristic and people who do not share it
3. **foster** good relations between people who share a relevant protected characteristic and people who do not

### A. Positive impacts

Implementing the strategy should have a long term benefit to all the Watford community, especially the more vulnerable and those on low income as it will help to:

- Mitigate against energy and resource cost rises;  
We know in particular that high energy prices impact older people, children, people with disabilities, those with mental and physical health problems and conditions and pregnant women.
- Reduce pollution and congestion;
- Provide access to nature as well as green space;  
We know green space is valued across the community but particularly by families with children and those without access to private gardens.
- Prepare the borough for changes resulting for climate change.  
We know older people are more likely to be vulnerable to the impacts of climate change, such as heat waves, water shortages and extreme weather events, due to a combination of age, health issues and greater social isolation. Therefore, any actions that mitigate climate change will have a positive impact on older people.

People with disabilities and long-term health conditions may be more likely to be vulnerable to the impacts of climate change, such as heat waves and extreme weather events, due to a combination of health issues and lower average incomes. Therefore, any actions that mitigate climate change will have a positive impact on people with disabilities.

Some religious groups may find it more difficult to carry out some religious practices as a result of either longer term climatic change or extreme weather events. For example, water shortages may impact on washing after prayers for Muslim residents, and any shortages of particular food items caused by global impacts of climate change on agriculture may lead to shortages of foods required to meet special dietary requirements for some religious groups. Therefore, any actions that mitigate climate change will have a positive impact on people



from some of our religious groups.

- There are a number of actions which bring the community together within the delivery plan that will foster good relations between people who share a relevant protected characteristic and people who do not. These include Great Big Green Week, volunteering events through the River Colne Project, providing opportunity / support on food growing, as well as working with businesses and local people to take action on climate change.

## **B. Negative impacts**

The potential negative impacts relate to costs of implementing changes, whether for individuals, within the council or within the borough.

Other negative impacts relate to perceptions that some things are now off limits, without an alternative solution, e.g. 'I am being told not to drive my car, but there are no bus routes, I can't walk where I want to go and I don't feel safe cycling'.

Some minority ethnic residents may experience language barriers, which may make it more difficult to access information provided by the council about climate change, including reducing health risks related to climate change. Rather than routinely making information available in community languages, the council provides translated materials on request, although our website has functionality to translate into most languages. However, we can consider translating advice on responding to climate change risks into community languages for groups where there are a large number of non-English speakers.

## **6. Overall conclusion**

Overall, Watford's Environmental Strategy should have a positive impact across all the protected characteristics, although short term there may be some negative impacts or perceived negative impacts, especially as we will all need to make changes in how we do things. Climate change and ecological destruction across the globe will affect all of us, and is starting to already. It is likely to affect those who are disadvantaged more, whether in the UK or globally. Therefore taking action to limit, mitigate and adapt to this will have a positive impact, both short and long term. Throughout the implementation, the council will monitor the impacts across the community to understand if there is any differential impact for those with protected characteristics.

## Summary of potential positive impacts and ways in which they can be ensured

Positive Impact	Protected characteristics	Ways to ensure the positive impact
Reduced money spent on energy, water and other resources.	Age, disability, ethnicity, belief, gender	Work with fuel poor to facilitate better energy efficiency in homes; Work with partners to promote ways to safely reduce energy, water and other resource bills, with low cost measures. E.g. water saving devices, draught proofing, etc.
Improved air quality and reduced pollution and congestion	Potentially all, but specifically Age, disability, ethnicity, belief, gender	Ensure that TTIW actions recognise the implications to certain groups, such as those with disabilities
Improved access to nature	Potentially all, but specifically Age, disability, ethnicity, belief, gender	Ensure that when managing for nature, there are still areas which are also accessible for people, such that they can experience nature positively within Watford.
Ensure we are prepared for changes in weather patterns due to increase in average global temperature, e.g. due to flooding, extreme heat, drought and cost of heating homes	Potentially all, but specifically Age, disability, ethnicity, belief, gender	Ensure that where individual homes or work places cannot be adapted there are accessible alternatives Look at how urban heat island effect can be mitigated in dense urban areas.

## Summary of potential negative impacts and ways in which they can be removed or mitigated

Negative Impact	Protected characteristics	Ways to mitigate the negative impact
Cost of implementing measures	Potentially all, but specifically Age, disability, ethnicity, belief, gender	Look for grant funding for cash poor and fuel poor households to implement measures.
Actions seen as anti car, and so those who need a car discriminated against.	disability	<p>Ensure that dialogue on moving away from cars and towards active travel reflects diverse population;</p> <p>Ensure that active travel options are safe for the wide range of users, and minimise conflict between different users;</p> <p>Ensure alternatives to the car outside active travel are also discussed, such as public transport, but also use of cars through a car club.</p>

**This EIA has been approved by:**

..... **Date** .....

Part A

**Report to:** Cabinet

**Date of meeting:** Monday, 13 March 2023

**Report author:** Associate Director of Property & Asset Management

**Title:** Approval of Croxley Business Park Business Plan 2023/24

## 1.0 Summary

- 1.1 At the point of entering into the long lease of Croxley Business Park in July 2019, the Council and its team of advisors inherited a business plan from the Park's then owners, Columbia Threadneedle. A new business plan is required on an annual basis in order for the council to meet its own objectives and to ensure the Park delivers on the rationale behind the council's acquisition.
- 1.2 The key financial objectives that were agreed by Council at its meeting of 23<sup>rd</sup> January 2019 was that there would be a net revenue of £1.5m (unindexed) per annum delivered over the first 10 years, and thereafter £1m per annum. The capital contribution secured by the council as part of the lease agreement was to serve two primary purposes; being to fund planned and preventative maintenance across the buildings on the Park and to ensure the primary financial objective was met by acting as a reserve fund to deliver the same revenue contributions.
- 1.3 Since the council acquired the Business Park in 2019, contracted rents have grown from £9,669,940 + VAT to £ 13,661,534 + VAT. To March 2022 the income, when compared to the original projections prior to purchase, has been ahead of expectations, however the financial model now assumes, from March 2023, that Building 1 is let and therefore the income is currently underneath the purchase projections. It is worth noting that Building 1 aside the remainder of the Park is performing ahead of the income projections at purchase.
- 1.4 To assist in any business plan formulation, over the course of 2020 a financial model was developed by the council with the assistance of the asset management team at Lambert Smith Hampton Investment Management (LSHIM) and Grant Thornton (GT), to allow forecasts to be made on a letting-by-letting basis across the Park. This allows decisions to be taken by the council on letting terms, refurbishment proposals and lease events (rent reviews, lease renewals/extensions, dilapidation claims etc) that are aligned with the key financial metrics as outlined in 1.2 above but reflect market conditions that are prevailing at the time.

1.5 With the benefit of this model, the Croxley Business Park team, comprising WBC officers, LSHIM and Workman LLP have developed a Business Plan for the 2023/2024 financial year following on from the approval of the 2022/23 plan in February 2022. The Plan is to be updated annually and brought back to Cabinet for approval on that basis. The Plan is attached at appendix 1

1.6 As previously adopted, to allow WBC officers to actively asset manage the Park during the course of the year, it is proposed that delegated authority be granted such that lease events (including rent review, lease regears, dilapidation claims, setting of service charge budget etc) can be approved by the responsible officer, provided such approvals are in line with the tolerances set out and described in the Business Plan. The delegated authority also covers targeted capital expenditure on refurbishments proposed under the business plan. Such delegated authority will not require renewal annually but will be aligned in accordance with the prevailing Business Plan as approved by Cabinet.

## 2.0 Risks

### 2.1

<b>Nature of risk</b>	<b>Consequence</b>	<b>Suggested Control Measures</b>	<b>Response</b> (treat, tolerate, terminate or transfer)	<b>Risk Rating</b> (combination of severity and likelihood)
No Business Plan is developed and approved	There will be no means by which Finance can accurately forecast the performance of the Park	Adopt a Business Plan for each financial year	Treat	4
No Business Plan is developed and approved	Individual decisions will be taken with no ability to ensure they will meet the performance expectations	Adopt a Business Plan for each financial year	Treat	4
No Business Plan is developed and approved	Authority for entering into leases, and other lease events will be brought back to Cabinet on a frequent basis, leading to possible abortive deals	Adopt a Business Plan for each financial year	Treat	4

The market moves significantly within year and the Plan is no longer relevant	The forecasts in the model will no longer be relevant/realisable.	Monitor, through the quarterly PIB reports the performance of the Park against the adopted Plan	Treat	8
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### 3.0 Recommendations

Cabinet is asked to:

- 3.1 Approve the Business Plan for 2023/2024 as produced by LSHIM, and more particularly as attached at Appendix 1.
- 3.2 Agree the delegations to the Associate Director of Property & Asset Management as outlined in paragraph 4.5 and also set out in Appendix 1.

**Further information:**

Peter Hall  
peter.hall@watford.gov.uk

**Report approved by: Tom Dobrashian**

### 4.0 Detailed proposal

**Performance**

- 4.1 Whilst full details of the income performance is contained within the Part B Appendix, it is relevant to note the following achievements.
- 4.2 The projected headline rental levels assumed at the time of purchase have been met where a lease event (new letting, lease renewal or rent review) has occurred. The industrial headline rental levels are in fact outperforming the levels assumed at the time of purchase.
- 4.3 The completion of Building 1 comprising 85,000 sq ft was met in March 2021, a month ahead of schedule, despite Covid and the national lockdowns. A letting of the top floor of c20,000 sq ft to Signet has now completed. However, the remaining 3 floors of c60,000sq ft remain available and are becoming a drag on the financial performance of the Park.
- 4.4 It is anticipated that some occupiers will vacate due to lease expiries or breaks and a further programme of refurbishment works to vacant units will be required. The refurbishments proposed in the Business Plan will ensure that an appropriate level

and variety of office suites/floors will be available to prospective tenants and industrial units refurbished when available to ensure product availability. Taking account of the proposed refurbishments in the 2023/24 business plan the 5 year spend on planned preventative maintenance works from purchase in 2019 – 2024 (which includes refurbishments) is in line with the assumptions made on acquisition.

## Delegations

- 4.5 Once endorsed by the Council, this business plan will provide the Associate Director of Property & Asset Management with the authority to agree all matters within the parameters of this report, specifically items covering:

Items	Delegated Authority subject to:
New lettings	The headline rents and rent free being at, above (or not less than 90%) of the operational model assumptions in Section 1 of the business plan.
Lease renewals	The headline rents and rent free being at, above (or not less than 90%) of the operational model assumptions in Section 1 of the business plan.
Rent Reviews	The average rent over the review period being at or above (or not less than 95%) of the levels in Section 8 of the business plan.
Refurbishments	The refurbishments be committed up to the levels specified in Section 7 of the business plan, with a 15% tolerance if costs increase during the year.
Dilapidations	Dilapidations to be agreed at levels specified in Section 7, with a 15% tolerance if dilapidations assessments are marginally below these levels.
Service Charge	Approval given to authorise the budget for 1 <sup>st</sup> July 2023 – 30 <sup>th</sup> June 2024 at a tolerance of between 10% +/- from the anticipated budget of £5.7m for 2023/24 as detailed in section 11.

Regular reports are taken to the Property Investment Board, Chaired by the Portfolio Holder for Property, with proposals outlined and discussed prior to decisions being made.

- 4.6 Items not covered by these approved delegations will be authorised on a business case basis in accordance with the council’s Scheme of Delegation.

## 5.0 Implications

### 5.1 Financial

- 5.1.1 The Shared Director of Finance comments that the financial performance of the Croxley Park investment should be measured over the duration of the investment. The Council holds the Croxley Park reserve to manage the impact of fluctuations in financial performance on the Council’s general fund.



## 5.2 **Legal Issues** (Monitoring Officer)

- 5.2.1 The Group Head of Democracy and Governance comments that providing delegated authority to the Associate Director of Property & Asset Management will enable transactions to be completed promptly.

## 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 Equality Impact Assessment is required.

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 modelling is being undertaken by existing team members within Finance with support and training from external advisors and surveying support from within the Property & Asset Management service. No additional staffing is required as a result of adopting the Business Plan or the use of the model in order to assess the performance of the Plan.

## 5.5 **Accommodation**

- 5.5.1 There are no accommodation issues arising.

## 5.6 **Community Safety/Crime and Disorder**

- 5.6.1 There are no community safety/crime and disorder issues arising.

## 5.7 **Sustainability**

- 5.7.1 The Business Plan, by identifying refurbishment and other works necessary to prepare buildings for reletting, will take into account the requirements of building regulations and other statutory requirements (eg MEES legislation) prevailing at the time and any relevant works of repair will in particular consider appropriate energy efficiency measures to assist in delivering the Council's target of net carbon zero by 2030.
- 5.7.2 A specialist Environmental Consultancy, Low Carbon Alliance (LCA) were appointed in mid-2022 to support the Council in meeting their energy reduction goals across Croxley Park and, in due course, the wider property portfolio. LCA are leading on monitoring and measurement of energy data which will be used to set baseline energy consumption building levels. From which targets can be set to reduce energy

levels having engaged with the tenants. In addition to these objectives LCA will make the Council aware of best practice, changing legislation and create an ESG statement / set of objectives which reflects the council's stated aims. Following the initial set up costs, the ongoing costs of LCA will be recovered through the annual service charge.

## **Appendices**

- Part B Appendix 1 – Croxley Park Business Plan – 2023/24.

## **Background papers**

- Acquisition of Leasehold Interest in Croxley Business Park – Extraordinary Council, January 23 2019 Council Report.

# Agenda Item 13

## Part A

Report to:	Cabinet
Date of meeting:	13 March 2023
Report author:	Town Hall Quarter Programme Manager
Report sponsor:	Chief Executive
Portfolio holder:	Peter Taylor, Elected Mayor of Watford
Report title:	Town Hall Quarter programme: An update to the Town Hall and Colosseum Refurbishment Business Cases

### 1.0 Executive Summary

- 1.1 On 18 January 2021, Cabinet approved the initiation of the Town Hall Quarter programme and associated vision, which sought to regenerate the area at the northern end of Watford High Street to realise the vision of *'a vibrant and thriving hub in the heart of the town, creating exciting new opportunities for our residents, businesses and community, contributing to Watford's prosperity and success'*. On 6 December 2021 Cabinet subsequently approved the Outline Business Cases for the Town Hall and Colosseum refurbishments, with the budget being approved by Full Council in January 2022.
- 1.2 The aim to regenerate the area at the northern end of the High Street and create a vibrant public space has been a council ambition for some time. However, the Covid-19 pandemic provided an opportunity to redefine the programme to ensure it could leverage maximum benefit for those sectors of the Watford community significantly impacted by the Covid lockdowns. It is not a programme that operates in isolation from the wider commitments to our community; the programme is strategically aligned to the council's ambitions, including as a direct deliverable within the Council Plan 2022-26, and contributes towards many of our key corporate strategies.
- 1.3 The Town Hall Quarter programme is an ambitious, exciting and innovative plan to redefine a key part of Watford's thriving town centre. It will ensure we retain the town's regional draw, securing its reputation as not just a great place to shop, but as a vibrant and exciting place for culture and the arts, whilst simultaneously embracing the council's commitment to both heritage and sustainability. The programme represents a unique opportunity to deliver a bold vision of the future for the town, combining our ambitions for place shaping and public realm enhancements alongside an active commitment to businesses, our local economy, culture and our community.

- 1.4 Over the last 12 months there has been significant progress made in the delivery of the Town Hall Quarter Programme and this report presents a Full Business Case for the refurbishment of Watford Colosseum in addition to an overall update on the progress of the Town Hall refurbishment.
- 1.5 The Colosseum refurbishment Full Business Case is attached at Appendix 1 and recommends the appointment of AEG as operator of Watford Colosseum alongside a full refurbishment of the Colosseum building. The re-opening of a refurbished building will help create a strong cultural hub at the northern end of the High Street, complementing the varied cultural and creative facilities already present across the town and the future refreshed public realm space outside and around the historic Town Hall as part of the New Neighbourhood project. The reconfiguration and refurbishment plans have been developed in conjunction with the operator recommended for appointment, following a detailed dialogue process. Members, theatre design specialists and local cultural stakeholders have all been involved in the design to this point and, given the historical significance of the building, listed building consent was achieved in August 2022. The final design stage is near completion and this report seeks delegated authority for the Elected Mayor, in consultation with the Chief Executive and Associate Director of Customer and Corporate Services, to appoint the refurbishment contractor, providing the costs are within the council's existing budget. Subject to approval of this business case, the receipt of the final construction programme and contractual negotiations with the preferred operator, it is expected that the refurbished Colosseum will reopen, with a new operator, in Spring 2024. The implementation plan can be seen in section 7.6 of Appendix 1.
- 1.6 The Town Hall refurbishment is another key component of the programme. The Outline Business Case which was approved at Cabinet in December 2021 recommended a full refurbishment of the existing Town Hall building to facilitate the following changes:
- A radical 74% reduction in the floor space required by the council as they embed agile ways of working. This will allow for a new, more efficient workspace to be designed for both staff and members, focusing on the need for collaboration, promoting health and wellbeing and allowing customers to be provided with the best service. It will reduce the cost of the council operation and allow for the use of the iconic Town hall building to be redefined, as below.
  - The relocation of Watford Museum from its current home at Benskin House to the heritage rooms at the front of the Town Hall providing a new, interactive and exciting experience for residents and visitors, celebrating the rich and diverse history of our town.
  - The creation of an Innovation and Incubation Hub to support small and medium enterprises across the region, boosting employment and providing sector growth through occupants 'clustering' in one place.

- Opening the Town Hall up for our community, not just through access to the museum and Innovation Hub, but also through the siting of a café facing and opening out onto the new Town Square, linking the refreshed public realm space immediately adjacent to the Town Hall with the building itself. As well as providing greater openness of the Town Hall and access to local democracy, the new space will provide fit-for-purpose, value for money space available for the use of community organisations (e.g. meeting rooms, counselling space, touchdown working space)

There has been significant progress in the design development for the Town Hall refurbishment. This report seeks delegated authority for the Elected Mayor in consultation with the Chief Executive and Associate Director of Customer and Corporate Services to appoint the contractor for the Town Hall refurbishment subject to the final contract price being within the overall project budget envelope as outlined in Section 5.1 of this report. Subject to the final price being affordable, it is expected that the refurbishments will be completed by Spring 2024 which will then allow for the Innovation Hub to launch in Summer/Autumn 2024 and the museum in Summer 2025, following completion of the fit out.

- 1.7 The refurbishment of both the Town Hall and Colosseum are being complemented by extensive decarbonisation works, following the council's successful application for funding from the government's Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme. This work has been underway since 2022 and is due to complete in April 2023. The £3.2m grant, which highlights the council's commitment to sustainability, has been used to refurbish windows, heating control and lighting improvements, cavity wall insulation and the introduction of photovoltaic panels and storage; all of which will introduce enhanced utility efficiency contributing to the council's sustainability target and reducing electricity, gas and water consumption as well as the overall carbon footprint of the building.
- 1.8 The ambitions for the Town Hall Quarter Programme to realise the vision of creating '*a vibrant and thriving hub in the heart of the town*' are cemented by the redevelopment of the surrounding area to promote investment and growth in Watford, secure transition to a low-carbon economy and support the cultural and creative sectors alongside the delivery of a vibrant and attractive new neighbourhood. Following a competitive dialogue procurement process, in November 2022 Cabinet approved the recommendation of Mace Develop as a preferred private sector development partner with whom the council could establish a joint venture (JV) vehicle to develop the land around the Town Hall. Mace and the council agreed to pause formal investment at the current time due to existing market uncertainty but work on a business plan continues. It is intended that a report will come back to Cabinet in late 2023 or earlier should market conditions stabilise.
- 1.9 In line with the council's approach to programme and project management across the organisation, a flexible resourcing model is in place that allows resource to flex in line with the programme implementation plan. This ensures

that costs associated with resourcing are similarly proactively managed with any resource not required redeployed to other programmes and/or projects within the council, representing a saving to the programme and keeping costs to a minimum where possible. The Programme Board and Member Steering Group will maintain an overview of the resourcing model.

- 1.10 The Equality Impact Analyses for both the Town Hall and Colosseum refurbishments identified a number of positive impacts. Further detail is given in section 5.4 below and a review of the Equality Impact Analysis for the Colosseum in line with the Full Business Case (Appendix 1 Part B) is attached in Appendix 1c (Part B).

## 2.0 Recommendations

- 2.1 To select AEG as preferred bidder for the Colosseum Operator re-tender and to authorise the Director of Partnerships, in consultation with the Group Head of Democracy and Governance and the Portfolio Holder for Neighbourhood Services, to enter into negotiations and contract with the preferred bidder, keeping the Elected Mayor and Town Hall Quarter Member Steering Group updated on the progress of negotiations.
- 2.2 To hold Parkwood in reserve should the council be unable to reach contractual agreement with AEG pending financial viability.
- 2.3 To authorise the Elected Mayor in consultation with the Chief Executive and Associate Director of Customer and Corporate Services to appoint the contractor for the Colosseum refurbishment works, subject to the final contract sum being within the overall programme budget envelope as outlined in section 5.1 of this report.
- 2.4 To authorise the Elected Mayor in consultation with the Chief Executive and Associate Director of Customer and Corporate Services to appoint the contractor for the Town Hall refurbishment works subject to the final contract sum being within the overall programme budget envelope as outlined in section 5.1 of this report.
- 2.5 To authorise the sum of £1,184k to be taken from the Strategic CIL fund to contribute towards the maintenance and operation of the Colosseum

## 3.0 Decision Pathway

- 3.1 Next decision-making body Cabinet:
  - 3.1.1 Indicative date: 13<sup>th</sup> March 2023
- 3.2 Final decision-making body: [Cabinet](#)
  - 3.2.1 Indicative date: 13<sup>th</sup> March 2023

Contact Officer:

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Reviewed and signed off by: *Donna Nolan, Chief Executive*

## 4.0 Detailed Proposal

### 4.1 Programme Background

- 4.1.1 The Town Hall Quarter is an ambitious and comprehensive 10-year programme of activity at the northern end of Watford High Street to realise a vision of:

*‘a vibrant and thriving hub in the heart of the town, creating exciting new opportunities for our residents, businesses and community, contributing to Watford’s prosperity and success’*

The Town Hall Quarter is a key deliverable within the Council Plan 2022-26. It is a programme for the community, at the heart of the community and brings together a number of key council projects into a single programme of work, with each component contributing to the overall vision. It is a programme repurposed for the post-Covid, cost of living era, recognising the significant benefits it will bring to our community; providing support for our businesses in a challenging economic climate, empowering our cultural organisations, celebrating and protecting our local heritage and making a reality our sustainability aspirations. It also seeks to cement the town’s role as a regional shopping and visitor destination and a centre for the arts.

- 4.1.2 The existing programme was formally initiated in January 2021 with authority given and budget allocated for the next phase of discovery work to commence. This first phase culminated in the development and subsequent approval of the outline business cases for the Town Hall and Colosseum refurbishments by Cabinet in December 2021. In January 2022, Budget Council approved the financial resource necessary to deliver the next phase of the Town Hall Quarter programme, including in relation to the Town Hall and Colosseum refurbishments. Over the last 12 months the programme has progressed significantly. This report details the key milestones that have been achieved in the last period and provides an update against the budget that is allocated.
- 4.1.3 Whilst the aim to improve the area around the Town Hall, which is regarded as underutilised, had been a council ambition for some time some time, the emergence of Covid-19 and the development of our new Strategic Framework, led by our Council Plan 2022-26, provided an opportunity to strategically align the Town Hall Quarter programme with the wider renewal of the town following the successive lockdowns. See section 4.3 for more information on the strategic alignment of the programme with the council’s wider ambitions.
- 4.1.4 The Town Hall Quarter programme is now expected to radically transform the area around the Town Hall, securing a thriving new quarter with new homes,

employment and public space, which will be underpinned by a revived creative, cultural and heritage offer. It will revitalise Watford, providing a huge economic boost post Covid and align with the council's own commercial aspirations, securing our financial future so that we can continue to invest in services for our residents and businesses.

## **4.2 Programme Context: Town Hall Quarter Vision**

4.2.1 The vision, the outward facing description of the programme, which defines the improvements, innovations, new services, facilities and ways of working, is essential to encouraging and gaining the commitment and support of our many stakeholders who are interested in, and impacted by, the programme. The right vision describes a compelling future, matches the degree of transformational change the programme will deliver, and needs to be bold and describe the desired future. Having an effective and compelling vision which resonates with those across the town is, therefore, a critical element in ensuring that the programme has the right foundations and that there is a clear and consistent approach to communications and messages to stakeholders.

4.2.2 The following vision for the programme, which incorporates a greater focus on community involvement and outcomes, has been agreed by the Town Hall Quarter Member Steering Group and approved by Cabinet:

### **Delivering for our Community – At the Heart of our Community**

Our ambitious and transformational Town Hall Quarter programme will deliver a vibrant and thriving hub in the heart of the town, creating exciting new opportunities for our residents, businesses and community, contributing to Watford's prosperity and success.

Through the scheme, the council will:

- Make better use of our historic Town Hall, opening it up for greater community and business use, securing its long term future and putting it firmly at the centre of the life of the town
- Boost local jobs, offering an inspiring, dynamic and well-connected new space for people to work, start and grow their businesses
- Generate work opportunities for our young people, providing attractive career paths and links to local employment
- Champion a greener, more sustainable Watford, contributing to our 2030 net carbon zero target
- Anchor the north of the town centre, forging a new generation High Street in Watford, generating greater footfall and activity as more people live, work and visit the area



- Celebrate our diverse culture and heritage, connecting Watford's rich history with that of our Town Hall, creating an innovative new home for our Museum and using local voices to tell the town's story
- Strengthen Watford's regional role as a centre for culture and the arts, opening up more creative and community uses for Watford Colosseum, encouraging up and coming artists and performers
- Secure much needed new high quality homes within an attractive new neighbourhood
- Create appealing and welcoming new outdoor places where people can meet, relax and spend time
- Demonstrate how we make best use of our resources, making sound financial decisions and achieving positive returns on our investments

### **REJUVENATE, RENEW, REVITALISE**

#### **4.3 Strategic Alignment**

The Town Hall Quarter programme aligns and contributes to a range of strategic ambitions committed to by the council, including in the Council Plan 2022-26 where the delivery of this activity is a stated commitment. The programme also helps to fulfil the ambitions outlined within our Economic Growth Strategy 2021-25, Cultural Strategy 2018-2025, Environmental Strategy 2023-2030 and Customer Experience Strategy 2022-26.

#### **4.4 Refurbishing and Re-opening the Colosseum: Full Business Case**

Watford Colosseum is a popular and much-loved regional entertainment venue situated adjacent to the Town Hall in Watford town centre. The refurbishment of the building is an integral part of the Town Hall Quarter. The Colosseum, which was significantly impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic, has previously been managed by an operator whose contract was terminated by mutual agreement in December 2020. The cessation of the operator contract has provided an ideal opportunity to undertake much needed refurbishment and reconfiguration work to the building whilst causing the minimum disruption possible. In December 2021 Cabinet approved the recommended option for refurbishment - to undertake a full refurbishment of the Colosseum building. This involves: a comprehensive refurbishment of the building systems, fabric and plant to replace end-of-life equipment, address backlog maintenance issues and bring the building up to modern standards. The recommended option will also see the delivery of a programme of enhancements to the building, addressing issues that currently negatively impact on the building's commercial operation.

The programme of work currently anticipates practical completion of the refurbishment works in November 2023 with the venue opening shortly

afterwards in the new year, subject to the lead-in needs of the operator. It should be noted that this timeline is dependent on the receipt of the final design, cost plan and programme expected in late March 2023.

Aside from the benefits to the actual building, the refurbishment will deliver a wider economic contribution to the town by bringing more people into the town centre, with public engagement to date confirming that future visitors to the Colosseum would combine their visit with a meal, drink or shopping trip. It would also provide job opportunities for approximately 13 full time and numerous casual staff and a number of 'community' days.

#### **4.4.1 Project progress: Colosseum Refurbishment**

Since December 2021 the design team including architects, structural, mechanical and electrical engineers as well as theatre and acoustic experts have developed the approved stage 2 'Concept Designs' in conjunction with significant engagement from officers, Members, local cultural stakeholders and potential operators. The Member Steering Group approved the RIBA Stage 3 designs in April 2022, following which Morgan Sindall was appointed as design and build contractor through a competitive procurement process. Alongside close dialogue with Members and the bidding operators, the Morgan Sindall design team has been developing the designs further into detailed, technical proposals and it is expected that these will be submitted with a final cost plan in March 2023. In order to ensure that the existing programme can be maintained, this report recommends that Cabinet authorise the Elected Mayor in consultation with the Chief Executive and Associate Director of Customer and Corporate Services to appoint the contractor for the Colosseum refurbishment works. This would be subject to the final contract sum being within the overall programme budget envelope. As there has been close engagement in the design development, it is not anticipated that there will be any unexpected design items in the final submission.

#### **4.4.2 Project progress: Procurement of a new Colosseum Operator**

In March 2022, the Member Steering Group agreed a set of prioritised procurement objectives in order to drive the format of the procurement and the evaluation criteria. These are listed below:

- 1) To operate the Colosseum to eliminate any need for a subsidy for the facility and to provide a positive management fee payment or income to the council.
- 2) For the Operator to provide a commercially successful, balanced and varied public events and arts programme.
- 3) To enable cultural activity opportunities to encourage greater participation in the arts (daytime and off-peak hours), alongside developing a greater daytime use of the Colosseum.
- 4) Transfer of risk on asset management (repair, maintenance, lifecycle

replacement) to be transferred to the new operator. This will be achieved through a full repairing and maintenance lease, or operating contract, depending on the outcome of dialogue.

- 5) The Operator will be responsible for all utility costs and any other charges linked to the operation of the venue for the whole contract period (BID levy and business rates).

In June 2022, a competitive dialogue procurement process commenced to allow the council to explore the optimum commercial solution that would best meet the council’s agreed objectives for a future Colosseum operator contract. The procurement objectives listed in section 4.4.2 communicated to tenderers what the council’s aspirations were for the future operator contract and have been key to the assessment of bidders’ proposals. The procurement objectives were used to inform the formulation of appropriate Evaluation Criteria for scoring submissions. The Evaluation Criteria for the procurement process were agreed as follows:

Volume	Weighting – Tier 1	Question	Weighting – Tier 2
1. General	n/a		
2. Operational proposals	42.5%	Question 1 – Approach to Operating Methodology	10%
		Question 2 – Approach to Programming	15%
		Question 3 – Approach to Pre-Opening & Design Development	5%
		Question 4 – Approach to Sustainability & Social Value	5%
		Question 5 – Amendments to Statement of Requirements	7.5%
3. Financial & Commercial proposals	40%	Question 6 – Financial Offer	25%
		Question 7 – Strength and Deliverability of the Business Plan	15%
4. Legal & Technical proposals	17.5%	Question 8 – Amendments to HoT	15%
		Question 9 – Amendments to Facilities Description	2.5%

### Procurement Process

The council received four expressions of interest during the Selection Questionnaire stage. From these, the Mayor and Member Steering Group agreed to the invitation of three organisations to participate in dialogue.

The dialogue process was separated into two stages:

- initial discussions followed by submission of Detailed Proposals which were reviewed by the council and its advisers with feedback provided to tenderers; and
- a Final Tender.

Early in the dialogue process one organisation decided to withdraw from the dialogue process stating that it did not believe that it would be able to meet the council's objectives, whilst also generating a suitable return from the operation.

Dialogue continued with the remaining two organisations both of whom submitted a Final Tender in January 2023. Both tenders were considered compliant, albeit they differed from the original commercial objectives. Through the dialogue process, and in response to feedback from the bidders and appointed commercial advisors, the council came to accept these alternative solutions. Following this rigorous process, it is recommended that AEG is selected as preferred bidder for the Watford Colosseum Operator contract and the Director of Partnerships, in consultation with the Group Head of Democracy and Governance and the Portfolio Holder for Neighbourhood Services, are authorised to enter into negotiations and contract with the preferred bidder.

With a second compliant bid, albeit one scoring lower than the preferred bidder, it is recommended that Parkwood are held in reserve should the council be unable to reach contractual agreement with AEG pending financial viability. Further details of the assessment of the two bids submitted are contained within Appendix 1b (Part B).

#### **4.5 The future of Watford Town Hall: Refurbishment and Revitalisation**

The Town Hall is a 1930s heritage building located at the northern end of Watford town centre and is currently the home of Watford Borough Council. However, the iconic building is under-utilised, particularly given the change in ways of working as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic. It is in need of significant refurbishment to ensure its long-term sustainability for ongoing use by the Watford community. There is, therefore, an opportunity to fundamentally change the way in which the Town Hall is used, to seek to maximise the value the building brings to the community and council through finding additional uses for the space, with a particular objective to open it up for more community use.

The outline business case approved at Cabinet in December 2021 recommended the refurbishment of the building and its future use as the location of Watford Museum, a significantly reduced but predominantly collaborative council space and the home of the proposed Innovation and Incubation Hub. Also on-site would be a public café opening out on to the new town square, which would be delivered through the public realm improvements by our New Neighbourhood Joint Venture partners, and space

for community and commercial use. As well as providing greater openness of the Town Hall and access to local democracy, the new space will provide fit-for-purpose, value for money space available for the use of community organisations, opening the Town Hall up to the community. New council office space on a much-reduced footprint with fit-for-purpose accommodation will provide modern facilities for use by members and staff and is expected to provide greater opportunities for staff to collaborate, improve staff wellbeing, motivation and morale and ultimately provide a better experience for customers and an enhanced ability for the council to recruit and retain high quality staff. This will enable the council's office accommodation footprint to reduce by around 74% from 2020 levels, reducing the running cost of the council occupied accommodation by approximately £300,000 per annum. Additionally, there will be less requirement for staff to travel, reducing local congestion and improving the council's carbon footprint whilst new accommodation for members will allow them to meet and engage with residents and the community, improving the council's reputation as an open, accessible organisation.

These works would collectively drive significant benefit to residents, the town and the council:

- A refreshed, exciting and modern museum offer would be available in the heritage rooms and part of the ground floor of the Town Hall for residents and visitors, creating a cultural hub with the Colosseum and driving further footfall to the town centre, supporting our local businesses. This would allow the sale of the listed Benskin House, which is no longer suitable as a location for a modern museum and heritage service and realise a capital receipt.
- The Innovation and Incubation Hub would provide space for local businesses supporting local employment within the town.
- The introduction of agile ways of working for the council and the adoption of new values and behaviours will allow the council footprint to reduce significantly from 2020 levels, freeing up the existing space for the above uses. The Town Hall space available for council staff and members will be focused on collaboration, building on the lessons learnt and new ways of working embraced over the last 18 months to provide the best service for customers, residents and businesses.

#### **4.5.1 Town Hall Refurbishment Project Progress**

In December 2021, Cabinet approved the recommendation of the Outline Business Case for the Refurbishment of the Town Hall to proceed with the delivery of a comprehensive refurbishment of the existing building and the fit out to service the proposed future uses of the Town Hall. Whilst a number of options, including do nothing, do minimum and a building refurbishment with an extension, were considered, the only affordable option, which allows the council to deliver on each of the project objectives, is to proceed with the

delivery of a comprehensive refurbishment of the existing buildings and the fit out to serve the proposed future uses of the Town Hall.

Whilst the refurbishment of the Town Hall itself will bring benefits, including a reduction in ongoing repairs and maintenance costs, enhanced utility efficiency and improved accessibility, it also enables significant benefits through creating space from which the other uses can operate with the key benefits being delivered by those uses.

Over the past 13 months there has been significant progress in the design of the future Town Hall space. Following engagement with services from across the council, Members and external stakeholders, the Member Steering Group approved the RIBA Stage 3 – ‘Developed Design’ for the Town Hall in November 2022. This stage of the design saw the further development of architect’s plans to include more detail on construction, mechanical and electrical specifications, floorplans, wall, floor and ceiling finishes and final maintenance and operations of the building. This also allows for more detailed costings on the project to be provided.

The designs provide for the following use of space:

- Basement: council and Museum storage and Pest Control work area
- Lower Chamber: Facilities Management and Elections Storage
- Ground Floor: Retained front facing public building reception with self-service facilities and bookable meeting, community and committee space, Museum galleries and entrance, exhibition space and café / retail space
- First Floor: Parking enforcement offices, Community space plus Museum learning and resource space with Museum galleries in the existing Committee Rooms. Retained Council Chamber.
- Second Floor: council collaborative, focused working space and meeting rooms

Following approval of these plans in November 2022 a planning application for Listed Building Consent was submitted and was later granted in January 2023. The design development to work up the final RIBA stage 4 – Technical Designs is being undertaken by Morgan Sindall following their appointment as a Design and Build Contractor in May 2022. It is anticipated that the final design and cost for these refurbishment works will be received in June 2023. This report recommends that Cabinet authorise the Elected Mayor, in consultation with the Chief Executive and Associate Director of Customer and Corporate Services, delegated authority to appoint the main building works contract, subject to approval of the design and the cost being within the overarching programme budget envelope.

## 5.0 Implications

### 5.1 Financial

5.1.1 The business cases for the Colosseum and Town Hall refurbishments, approved by Cabinet in December 2021, set out the capital cost model for the Town Hall Quarter programme whereby profits from the joint venture partnership of the New Neighbourhood project, along with the disposal of surplus and investment sites and capital funding already ring-fenced for the Colosseum refurbishment, would fund the works to the Town Hall and Colosseum. This model was subsequently approved by Full Council in January 2022.

5.1.2 In September 2022, Mace (Develop), the final potential partner within the competitive process, indicated that whilst they still wished to proceed with the scheme, they were not in a position to release funds until the economic climate was more certain. As a result, the Town Hall and Colosseum refurbishment projects (including associated projects) were decoupled from the profits of the future Joint Venture development of the New Neighbourhood, with the shortfall met through reprioritisation of the capital programme and the replacement of funding from the joint venture with additional borrowing.

5.1.3 The Shared Director of Finance comments that the latest estimates for the capital receipts ringfenced for the programme indicate that there will be a further additional borrowing requirement of £0.167m as some anticipated capital receipts for surplus sites have now been realised at marginally lower sale values. The additional Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) and interest charge associated with this additional borrowing requirement can be managed annually within the budget management process.

5.1.4 The below table shows the capital budget for the programme as approved at Council in January 2023 (unchanged from the total funding agreed in January 2022) and how this will be funded alongside the latest projections:

	January 2023 £m	Latest Breakdown £m
<b>Total Capital Budget</b>	<b>24.820</b>	<b>24.820</b>
<b>Funded by:</b>		
Planned Borrowing	-17.142	-17.142
Benskin House Capital Receipt	-0.500	-0.500
Capital Receipts - LSHIM (non/low income generating)	-4.240	-4.073
Capital Receipts - Surplus Sites	-2.938	-2.938
<b>Gap to be met through additional borrowing</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0.167</b>

5.1.5 The Colosseum and Town Hall Outline Business Cases presented in December 2021 showed an overall net positive revenue position of £141k which was

subsequently included within the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS). One of the objectives in the Outline Business Case for the Colosseum was that the operator contract would become cost neutral and let on a full repairing and insuring lease. This cost neutral objective was included in the MTFS as part of the £141k saving identified.

- 5.1.6 Through the dialogue process undertaken, all tenderers made it clear that they would not be willing to consider a full repairing and insuring lease. Tenderers have also shown that their business cases for a building of this scale are profitable, but only marginally so. They all require guaranteed returns for their services, with the council underwriting the costs, including the management fee, of the operator. The council's ability to manage this risk is through agreement of the annual business plan and an ability to terminate after year four if the council continues to be required to provide financial support outside of repairs and maintenance. The council will need to have both revenue and capital funding available to support the new operator and the maintenance of the building.

This means the council has an estimated funding requirement, over the first 3 years of the contract of £1,384k. There will need to be some flexibility to the funding identified as the split between revenue and capital will depend on the nature of the spend on repairs, enhancement and maintenance of the building. The following additional funding has been identified:

- Savings generated by changes to the museum services: £100k
- Use of the Sustainability Fund Reserve: £100k
- Use of CIL: £1,184k

- 5.1.7 The proposals are expected to be broadly cost neutral over the remainder of the term of the contract, although it will be necessary to build a reserve to manage the peaks and troughs of expenditure.

- 5.1.8 Beyond this pressure over the first three years of the operator contract, the programme continues to work towards achieving the position reflected in the MTFS. However, the business case relies on a number of assumptions in relation to the cost recovery of lettable space in both the Town Hall and the Annexe, and also the future cost of Facilities Management which will be determined via an ongoing review of the council's Facilities Management service to align with the future operation of the repurposed Town Hall.

- 5.1.9 Significant work has taken place on this over the last period to determine the cost position for specific areas of the Town Hall, based on these assumptions, and over the next period these will be tested (ie – current rates paid by community groups). If these assumptions are incorrect, there would be an additional pressure. However, with vastly reduced future council office space, the cost of operating council office accommodation continues to show a reduction of over £300k in the costs attributable to the accommodation of



Council staff which, along with the decarbonisation works, are already helping to mitigate any future pressure.

## **5.2 Legal issues (Monitoring Officer)**

- 5.2.1 The Group Head of Democracy and Governance comments that all procurements have been undertaken in accordance with the council's contract procedure rules and Public Contract Regulations and legal advice has been obtained throughout the Colosseum Operator retender competitive dialogue process from Browne Jacobson LLP. Browne Jacobson comment that they are not aware of any failure by the Council to comply with the PCR, or of any other instance of legal non-compliance, in relation to this procurement. The scores awarded in relation to the legal section are supportable and the overall scoring (with the result that AEG is named preferred bidder) flows from correct application of the overall, stated award criteria and is therefore the "correct" result in procurement terms. IPW... who were appointed to advise the council through the competitive dialogue process seeking a new operator comment that the competitive dialogue process was a fair, transparent and auditable process, undertaken in accordance with Public Contract Regulations 2015. AEG's tender was a quality submission, scoring the highest overall. Their tender demonstrated their abilities as an experienced venue operator with the capabilities to successfully manage the Watford Colosseum on behalf of the Council and meet its service requirements.
- 5.2.2 Browne Jacobson have also provided legal advice on the council's ability to use its strategic CIL to help with the funding of the operation and maintenance of the Colosseum. They have confirmed that the Planning Act 2008 and Community Infrastructure Levy Regulations 2010 (as amended) do provide for the council to use strategic CIL to fund the maintenance and operation of infrastructure that supports the development of the council's area and that using it to operate and maintain a recreational facility such as the Colosseum is included in the wider definition of infrastructure.
- 5.2.3 Cabinet set up a Member Steering Group to provide oversight of the programme. This steering group has been kept regularly appraised of progress and will continue to have oversight as the programme progresses. Regular formal updates on the progress of the programme will also be provided to Cabinet.

### 5.3 Risks

Nature of risk	Consequence	Suggested Control Measures	Response (treat, tolerate, terminate or transfer)	Risk Rating (combination of severity and likelihood)
Assumptions made in the revenue model regarding cost recovery for the Community Space and Innovation Hub are unrealistic	The council will bear additional costs, increasing revenue pressure if cost recovery is not achievable	Discussions with community groups to commence in the coming months to understand appetite	Treat	2 x 4 = 8
Capital financing charges exceed the 3% interest rate budgeted for	Capital financing will be in excess of the budget	Risk to be reviewed across the capital programme	Tolerate	2 x 4 = 8
The Colosseum is not re-open in Spring 2024	Impact on ability for operator to undertake programming and income generation as per their business plan thus adding cost to the council	Clear programme plan in place with sufficient contingency. Appropriate Liquidated Ascertained Damages (LADs) in place to mitigate the delay risk to the Council.	Treat	2 x 2 = 4
Contract negotiations with the preferred Colosseum Operator fail	Final terms acceptable to both parties cannot be reached	Hold reserve bidder as it remained a compliant bid. Additional resource to focus on negotiations	Treat	2 x 3 = 6
Final contractor sums for the Colosseum are beyond the budget envelope leading to a delay in opening	Inflation, material shortages, additional remedial works to the ceiling	Professional advice sought to set the contingency level in the project given the market conditions Operator to be engaged on any	Treat	2 x 4 = 8

		design changes to reduce costs		
Final contractor sums for the Town Hall are beyond the budget envelope	Inflation, material shortages	Professional advice sought to set the contingency level in the project given the market conditions	Treat	2 x 4 = 8
A viable alternative innovation hub model cannot be developed	Cost recovery cannot be achieved and model shows a cost to the council	Investigate different split of uses of the Annexe floors between Innovation Hub and potential commercial letting	Treat	2 x 3 = 6
Stakeholders are not kept informed on progress of the works due to poor communication channels	Disengagement with the project, lack of clarity on when the venue will reopen impacting new launch	Clear communications plan in place and updates provided to THQ Stakeholder Group and Member Steering Group	Treat	2 x 2 = 4

## 5.4 Equalities, Human Rights and Data Protection

5.4.1 Under s149 (1) of the Equality Act the council must have due regard, in the exercise of its functions, to the need to –

- eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct prohibited by the Act
- advance equality of opportunity between persons who share relevant protected characteristics and persons who do not share them
- foster good relations between persons who share relevant protected characteristics and persons who do not share them.

In order to fulfil our duties under the Equality Act 2010 and the council's commitment to equality and diversity, an equalities impact analysis for both the Colosseum and the Town Hall were undertaken and included in the pack to Cabinet in December 2021. Following the developments detailed in this paper these analyses have been reviewed and updated. The analyses, for the Colosseum Refurbishment and the Town Hall Refurbishment are attached as Appendices 1b (Colosseum Refurbishment) and 2 (Town Hall Refurbishment) to this report.

### **Colosseum Refurbishment Equality Impact Analysis**

The main conclusions of the analysis are that the refurbishment of the Colosseum will bring about a number of positive impacts. It will ensure that the building remains inclusive and accessible and provides wider sectors of the community, including those with protected characteristics, with access to culture and the arts. No negative impacts which cannot be mitigated have been identified in relation to the refurbishment of the building but a number of recommendations have been made which will ensure that a commitment to equalities remains at the heart of the refurbishment.

The full Equality Impact Analysis is attached as Appendix 1c and has been reviewed and updated in light of the outcome of the Colosseum operator procurement and progression of the refurbishment plans.

### **Town Hall Refurbishment Equality Impact Analysis**

The Equality Impact Analysis identified a number of positive impacts from the Town Hall refurbishment proposals, recognising the opportunities to open up the Town Hall to the community, taking into account how the needs of those with protected characteristics can be incorporated into future designs and planning. Similarly, the needs of staff and members can be assimilated into the planning for the Town Hall, blending with the needs of the community to deliver a building that is welcoming, accessible and inclusive.

5.4.2 Following consideration, the proposals within the Town Hall project are not deemed to affect any of the fundamental rights and freedoms set out in the Human Rights Act 1998.

#### **5.4.3 Data Processing Impact Assessment**

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.

### **5.5 Sustainability**

5.5.1 In July 2019, Watford Borough Council declared a climate emergency and made a commitment to achieve net carbon neutrality by 2030. As such, sustainability is woven into the fabric of the Town Hall Quarter programme and, in particular, the refurbishment of both the Town Hall and Colosseum delivering on the vision to 'champion a greener, more sustainable Watford'.

5.5.2 The refurbishment of both heritage buildings will introduce enhanced utility efficiency contributing to the council's sustainability target and reducing

electricity, gas and water consumption as well as the overall carbon footprint of the building.

- 5.5.3 To achieve this, the council has been successfully awarded £3.2m from the government's Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme to decarbonise the Town Hall and Colosseum buildings. This work, which is scheduled to complete in April 2023, includes the refurbishment of windows, heating control and lighting improvements, cavity wall and roof insulation enhancements and the introduction of photovoltaic panels and storage.
- 5.5.4 Furthermore, the plans for ongoing agile working for staff is expected to reduce footfall within the town and reduce the carbon footprint of staff who will be making less journeys to the physical Town Hall and contributing towards less congestion on our roads, in line with our draft Sustainable Transport Strategy.
- 5.5.5 Sustainability was considered during the dialogue stage with tenderers for the future operation of the Colosseum. The Council is satisfied that either party would implement appropriate sustainability management arrangements.

## **5.6 People Implications**

- 5.6.1 It is assumed that the Colosseum operator contract will be managed by existing resource, however, as building maintenance liability and risk will now remain with the council it is possible that additional facilities and asset management resource will be required. This has been factored into the financial modelling included within section 5.1 above but requires further discussion with the preferred bidder in terms of an operating model. Furthermore, the revised usage and layouts of the Town Hall will also require review of building operation and facilities management. This is being undertaken as part of a wider review into this service.
- 5.6.2 Due to the uncertainty regarding the future operation of an Innovation and Incubation Hub, the staffing implications are not yet known.
- 5.6.3 It is anticipated through the relocation of the Museum to the Town Hall that there will be an appropriate staffing structure to reflect new opening hours, exhibition layout and activities proposed. This will be refined as the Full Business Case is developed, and is dependent upon whether the council is successful in its bid to the National Lottery Heritage Fund. The expected financial implication of these changes is included within the revenue modelling in this paper however the detail will be presented to Cabinet alongside the Full Business Case in 2024.
- 5.6.4 The projects themselves need to be adequately resourced to ensure that they are delivered. In line with the council's approach to programme and project management across the organisation, a flexible resourcing model is currently

in place and set to continue. Given that the need for project management is expected to change as the programme progresses, this approach will allow resource to flex in line with the programme implementation plan. This will also ensure that costs associated with resourcing are similarly proactively managed with any resource not required at redeployed to other programmes and/or projects within the council, representing a saving to the programme and keeping costs to a minimum where possible. The Programme Board and Member Steering Group will maintain an overview of the resourcing model.

#### **5.6.5 Accommodation**

In July 2022 council staff moved into the newly refurbished 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> floors of the Annexe as a temporary location whilst the Town Hall undergoes refurbishment. The Staff Ambassadors Group were closely engaged throughout the design of this space to meet our agile working needs. A staff survey was undertaken in November 2022 with an overwhelmingly positive response to the new, temporary space. Feedback from this survey and ongoing engagement with staff is supporting the design development of the permanent new council office space in the refurbished Town Hall. In addition to staff moving out of the Annexe when the Town Hall is refurbished, teams currently based at Wiggshall Depot will relocate to the Town Hall. These teams have been engaged in the design process to ensure their specific operational requirements are met by the new space. In line with the commitment contained within the Council Plan 2022-26, the programme will, therefore, introduce modern and fit for purpose offices which will ensure that the council can continue to deliver high quality services for residents.

- 5.6.6 It was recognised that there were a small number of teams whose operational requirements could not be met from the space available in the Annexe, therefore, these teams have remained at the Town Hall. Following the NHS vacation of the Terrapin last year, in October 2022 these teams remaining in the Town Hall relocated to the Terrapin to facilitate the completion of the decarbonisation works. These teams will remain in their temporary locations whilst the main Town Hall building is refurbished. Following this, they will be relocated to their final locations in the Town Hall. Undertaking the works in this order allows the requirements of these teams to be met from within the Town Hall Quarter throughout the works period.

### **5.7 Community Safety/Crime and Disorder**

- 5.7.1 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. Consequently, the implications of the programme and its constituent projects on crime and disorder have been considered. The dialogue with tenderers for the future Colosseum operator contract covered Community Safety/Crime and Disorder

and the Council is happy that both bidding operators would be able to provide sufficient management interventions to ensure safe operation of the Colosseum, inside and outside.

## 6.0 Actions arising from this Proposal

6.1 The final design, cost plan and programme is currently awaited from the construction contractor. Based on the current programme, it is expected that the Colosseum refurbishment will be completed in Winter 2023 when the appointed operator will undertake their own mobilisation activities ahead of opening in Spring 2024. It is expected that the Town Hall refurbishment will be completed in Spring/Summer 2024. The Museum fit out work would then commence and be ready to open in Summer 2025. A summary of the implementation plan, based on current information, is shown in the table below.

<b>Timeline</b>	<b>Activity</b>
March 2023	Colosseum operator appointed
April 2023	Decarbonisation works complete in the Town Hall and Colosseum
April 2023	Colosseum refurbishment commences
June 2023	Town Hall detailed designs complete and refurbishment commences
Winter 2023/24	Colosseum refurbishment complete
Spring 2024	Colosseum reopens
Spring 2024	Town Hall refurbishment complete
Spring 2024	Innovation Hub fit out complete and Hub opens
Summer 2024	Museum fit out commences
Summer 2025	Museum reopens in the Town Hall

6.2 Each project continues to be managed via a dedicated Project Board reporting into the Town Hall Quarter Programme Board, chaired by the Chief Executive. This will allow risks, issues and any potential changes to be actively managed and, where necessary, escalated with a full understanding of any implications. Political oversight will be maintained by a Member Steering Group, chaired by the Elected Mayor and in place since the initiation of the programme, which will continue to allow ongoing progress reporting and feedback from Members.

## 7.0 Appendices

- Appendix 1 – Colosseum Full Business Case (Part B)
- Appendix 1b – Report on the outcome of the Colosseum Operator Procurement process (Part B)

- Appendix 1c – Colosseum Refurbishment Equalities Impact Assessment (Part B)

## 8.0 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.

- Town Hall Quarter Cabinet Report dated 18 January 2021
- Town Hall Quarter Cabinet Report dated 6 December 2021
- Town Hall RIBA Stage 3 report
- Colosseum RIBA Stage 3 report
- Town Hall Refurbishment Equalities Impact Assessment