



**WATFORD
BOROUGH
COUNCIL**

CABINET

5 June 2023

7.00 pm

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

Contact

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01923 278377

Publication date: 26 May 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 13 March 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. Contract Procedure Rule Exemption: OCS CCTV Services (Pages 4 - 8)

Report of the Associate Director of Planning, Infrastructure and Economy

6. Business Intelligence Strategy (Pages 9 - 38)

Report of the Intelligence, Performance and Improvement Lead

7. Conservation Areas Management Plan - Actions 2023-26 (Pages 39 - 100)

Report of the Urban Design and Conservation Manager

8. Watford Commercial Service Business Plan update (Pages 101 - 111)

Report of the Head of Finance

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

9. 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 the previous item 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 Appendix there would be disclosure to them of exempt information as defined in Section 100(1) of the Act for the reasons stated below 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: Monday, 5 June 2023

Report author: Associate Director of Planning, Infrastructure and Economy

Title: Contract Procedure Rule Exemption: OCS CCTV Services

1.0 Summary

1.1 Under the council's Contract Procedure Rules an exemption agreed with a value over £100,000 should be reported to Cabinet for noting.

1.2 A contract exemption was sought for a 9 month extension to the Council's current contract with OCS to operate the Council's CCTV control room. The Council's CCTV control room is due to be relocated later this year and therefore a short extension was sought to maintain current operations during this period. The Council intend to undertake a full retender of the services provided to operate the control room later this year.

1.3 Attached as Appendix 1 is the exemption, in accordance with the Contract Procedure Rules, agreed by the Group Head of Place Shaping and Managing Director and outlined with the Portfolio Holder.

2.0 Risks

2.1

Nature of risk	Consequence	Suggested Control Measures	Response (treat, tolerate, terminate or transfer)	Risk Rating (combination of severity and likelihood)
Potential alternative suppliers challenge the council's decision to award this contract.	Limited due to the award being for an extension to an existing contract for a limited period of 9 months	A full retender of the current contract will be undertaken later this year	Tolerate	1
Transparency in decision-making	Limited as mitigation steps have been taken.	Mitigated through seeking senior management approval then reported to cabinet.	Tolerate	1

3.0 Recommendations

3.1 That the exemption be noted.

Further information:

Ben Martin

ben.martin@watford.gov.uk

Report approved by: Tom Dobrashian, Executive Director Place

4.0 Detailed proposal

4.1 The detail of the exemption and the reason for it can be found in the Appendix 1 of this report.

4.2 An exemption was sought for a 9 month extension to the Council's current contract with OCS to operate the Council's CCTV control room. The Council's CCTV control room is due to be relocated later this year and therefore a short extension was sought to maintain current operations during this period. The Council intend to undertake a full retender of the services provided to operate the control room later this year.

Implications

5.1 Financial

5.1.1 The Shared Director of Finance comments that the proposals are within current budgets.

5.2 Legal Issues (Monitoring Officer)

5.2.1 The Group Head of Democracy and Governance comments that the attached appendix gives the reason for the exemption in accordance with the contract procedure rules.

5.3 Equalities, Human Rights and Data Protection

5.3.1 There are no implications.

5.4 Staffing

5.4.1 The exemption allows the continued staffing of the Council's CCTV control room.

5.5 **Accommodation**

5.5.1 There are no implications.

5.6 **Community Safety/Crime and Disorder**

5.6.1 The exemption enabled the continued operation of the Council's CCTV control system that supports the Council's community safety objectives.

5.7 **Sustainability**

5.7.1 There are no implications.

Appendices

Appendix 1 – contract exemption.

Background papers

No papers were used in the preparation of this report.

Exemption from Contract Procedure Rules - request form - Request Approved

ECP490398564

Your details

First name	Jamie
Last name	Fraser
Email address	jamie.fraser@watford.gov.uk
Job Title	Interim CCTV Manger
Section/Department	Planning & Infrastructure

Exemption request details

Exemption category	Prior approval
Details / Circumstances / Explanation of why an exemption was required	Please see attached letter supporting the request
Attach copy of email(s) if appropriate	OCS 1.docx
Contract Title	OCS CCTV services
Vendor / Contractor	OCS
Date Contract let	03 March 2023
Term / Duration of Contract	9 Months
End date	24 December 2023
Total Value of Contract	Â£160K
Contract Manager name	Ben Martin (via Jamie Fraser)
Contract Manager email	Jamie.Fraser@watford.gov.uk
Comments / Other Information	As discussed in meetings with legal
Date	24 February 2023

Group Head of Service approval

Decision	Approve and forward to the Managing Director
Date	24 February 2023

Managing Director decision

Decision	Approve the request
Managing Director	Donna Nolan
Date	24 February 2023

Previous comments

2023-02-24 08:40 - Tom Dobrashian: I am approving due to exceptional circumstances, to allow us to assess alternative provision, which would mean a different tender than was envisaged. Please note once approved the decision will need to be reported to Cabinet 2023-02-24 10:54 - Debbie Paxton: Approved on the basis of the wording below and not the original document. A procurement exemption is sought to extend the current contractual arrangement for CCTV control operators for WBC for a period of 9 months. The current service provided is a full CCTV support service for WBC and Hertfordshire police. The service is operational 365 days of the year 24/7. We are seeking an exemption to exceptional circumstances, a change in potential location and hosting would require us to totally revise a tender process. An extension will allow us to review options and then decide a way forward for CCTV operation in Watford prior to a tender exercise. The Council let the original Contract in 2013 in accordance with EU Procurement Rules. It was a five year Contract up to 2018. The Council then extended the contract to September 2020 exercising our own under 50% rule in accordance with our Contract Procedure Rules. The contract was then further extended in September 2020 for two years under Emergency Procedures because of Covid. Due to further complications and uncertainties around the timescales and operational issues associated with the enforced relocation of the current control room In September 2022, the contract was extended by letter for 6 months until 28th February 2023. This exemption also seeks retrospective approval of that extension as no exemption was sought at the time. The timescales associated with the current proposals to relocate the control room to the new police station in George Street are now clearer and should this be progressed it is likely that the control room would relocate in Q4 2023. And we would go ahead with a conventional tender for staffing oversight of a CCTV control room. However, a review of alternative relocation options is underway which may lead to more of a hosting and supervision proposal " which would mean that the Council's operational requirements change significantly. We will not be in a position to agree a form of tender for probably 2 months " and then under either scenario would need to run a tender exercise, hence seeking a 9 month extension. On that basis a further 9 month extension to the current contractual arrangement is sought to maintain the current operations in advance of the relocation of the current control room. Following this period the Council will have retendered for any services required in association with our future CCTV operations. If the exemption is not granted, the Council's current contractual arrangements will expire on 1 March and there is not sufficient time to retender for interim services before this would happen. This would create significant risk to the organisation and its CCTV operations and therefore it is recommended that a short extension of 9 months be granted in order to allow sufficient time for a longer term solution to be put in place.

Portfolio holder

Name of the Portfolio Holder informed Ben Martin

Date the Portfolio Holder was informed 03 March 2023

Report to: *Cabinet*
Date of meeting: *05 June 2023*
Report author: *Intelligence, Performance and Improvement Lead*
Report sponsor: *Associate Director of Customer and Corporate Services*
Portfolio holder: *Cllr Mark Watkin*
Report title: *Business Intelligence Strategy 2023-26*
Nature of report: *For approval*

1.0 Executive Summary

1.1 The Council Plan 2022-26 makes a commitment to “*deliver a step change in how we use our data and information so it strengthens our drive for endless improvement*”. The development of the council’s Business Intelligence Strategy is a central plank in realising that commitment, setting out the strategic direction of the council’s Business Intelligence function, its place within the wider commitment to continuous improvement and an accompanying Delivery Plan covering the three years up to the end of the current Council Plan.

1.2 Business intelligence can transform the way in which data and information is used. It can be defined as the use of technology to combine data, software tools and best practice data analytics to support more data-driven decision making. It allows organisations to learn more about customers’ needs, to monitor performance and inform decision making. In short, business intelligence gives us more information to enable us to provide the very best services to our customers; the residents, businesses and community of Watford.

1.3 The council’s first Business Intelligence Strategy is attached at Appendix 1 and is presented to Cabinet for endorsement and approval.

2.0 Recommendations

2.1 Cabinet are requested to:

- Approve and formally adopt the Business Intelligence Strategy and Delivery Plan.

3.0 Decision Pathway

3.1 Final decision-making body: Cabinet

3.1.1 Indicative date: 5 June 2023

Contact Officer:

For further info please contact: *Claire Dow, Intelligence, Performance and Improvement Lead*

Email: Claire.dow@watford.gov.uk

Reviewed and signed off by: *Liam Hornsby, Associate Director of Customer and Corporate Services*

4.0 Detailed Proposal

4.1 The council holds a huge amount of data within IT systems, reports and service documents. Making sense of this data and translating it into useful and insightful information which can improve our services for customers, support decision-making and aid transparency can be challenging. The Council Plan 2022-26 recognises that there are currently untapped opportunities to harness this data more effectively to improve how the organisation operates and provides high quality services.

4.2 The first step in improving the corporate use of data was the implementation of the council’s Business Intelligence platform two years ago. This system has provided the organisation with a different way of collating information from across the council and presenting it in a way that adds value and can assist the organisation to achieve its wider objectives. Whilst significant progress has been made, it is, however, important to note that the build and implementation of a system does not, in itself, fundamentally change the way in which data is used to drive improvements. How the council uses this insight, the areas it elects to focus on and the embedding of a data driven approach is all integral to ensuring that the additional capability provided by the system leads to better outcomes for our residents, businesses and community.

4.3 As such, the Business Intelligence Strategy seeks to set out how the council will manage and maximise the use of data and information to achieve the following proposed vision:

“An information rich council which captures data accurately and efficiently and uses the insight gained from data analysis to drive performance, decision-making and transparency”

4.4 The strategy sets out a range of objectives that the council hopes to achieve through its implementation:

- Enable an information-rich organisation that is able to pro-actively and rapidly respond to emerging customer demand.
- Enable rapid, evidence-based decision making.
- Enable consistent delivery of more informed communications to customers.

- Support the organisation to deliver new initiatives, innovations and service improvements aligned with customer needs.
- Drive the development of the corporate performance framework and enable better scrutiny of council wide performance by officers and councillors.
- Help services to develop their use of data as a key tool to support the delivery and development of services for customers.

4.5 These objectives are underpinned by a range of draft principles which will be applied to the data that is collected and used by the organisation:

- Driven by customer insight
- Up to date, accessible information, collected once and used multiple times
- Single version of the truth
- Data valued as an asset to be utilised
- Drive value quickly, then build on it
- Open, shared data supporting transparency

4.6 It should also be noted that the Business Intelligence Strategy, and the council's approach to data and information, should not be considered in isolation. The Business Intelligence Strategy is driven by our Council Plan 2022-26 and will support the delivery of key strategies, such as our Customer Experience Strategy, whilst being underpinned by the organisation's values and behaviours which will support the culture change required to embed a more proactive approach to business intelligence.

4.7 The Business Intelligence Strategy will form part of the council's wider approach to continuous improvement, providing data in a compelling and valuable way which allows the organisation to make clear and well-informed decisions and identify ways in which to improve performance. As such, the recent review of council Key Performance Indicators, effectively forms the first stage of delivery of the new strategy. A Delivery Plan has been developed and has been included for approval alongside the Strategy. It sets out where resources will be focused to drive value as soon as possible. The Delivery Plan activities will be delivered as part of a programme supported by the council's Enterprise Programme Management Office with reporting on progress to the EPMO Assurance Group on a 6-weekly basis to provide ongoing oversight.

4.8 The Delivery Plan sets out a programme of activities split in to 5 workstreams:

1. Driving Performance

Develop a corporate performance framework using Business Intelligence tools to collect, analyse and present information and insights in a way that enables better scrutiny of council wide performance by officers and councillors.

2. Enhanced Decision Making

Support the organisation to deliver new initiatives, innovations and service improvements aligned with customer needs. This will be achieved by combining data from several different sources and developing reports, based on need, that provide a clearer picture of customer requirements, and their experiences when interacting with the council.

3. Data-driven and Insight Focused

Help services to develop their use of data as a key tool to support the delivery and development of services for customers. Through engagement and feedback with service leads, continue to improve data quality throughout the organisation and ensure dashboards continue to evolve in line with changing services and customer needs.

4. Delivering Change

Engage across the organisation to develop a program of culture change which will enable the whole organisation to recognise the value of business intelligence and develop capabilities to exploit it as a key decision-making tool. Develop tailored, small group training sessions to help staff to get the most out of the tools we have available to us. Work to improve data literacy across the organisation and support staff at all levels to feel more confident when working with data and empowered when making data related decisions.

5. Resilience

Ensure the right structure, staffing and line management arrangements in place to sufficiently support the implementation of Business Intelligence. Ensure the Business Intelligence tools the council relies upon are well managed, well utilised, user friendly and fit for purpose.

- 4.9 Whilst the Business Intelligence Strategy will be led by the Intelligence, Performance and Improvement Lead role, there will be a requirement for services from across the council to feed into the development of information, data and its use within services. Recognising that services already have limited capacity, development of dashboards will be on a needs basis where maximum value can be added and will build on the existing KPI review and Customer Experience work already undertaken to build dashboards with valuable information, utilising data already in the system.

5.0 Implications

5.1 Financial

5.1.1 The Shared Director of Finance comments that all costs in relation to the development and implementation of the strategy are included within existing budgets. It should be noted that a saving of £20,000 a year was agreed for the 2023/24 financial year, increasing to £25,000 a year from the 2024/25 financial year as reliance on consultancy diminishes and internal skills and resilience is increased. As such, delivering against the Delivery Plan as set out within this Strategy will be important in ensuring that the ambitions are achieved prior to the further reduction in budget.

5.2 Legal issues (Monitoring Officer)

5.2.1 The Group Head of Democracy and Governance comments that when developing individual dashboards the council will need to be mindful of any Data Protection implications.

5.3 Risks

Nature of risk	Consequence	Suggested control measure	Response (treat, tolerate, terminate, transfer)	Risk rating (combination of severity and likelihood)
Business Intelligence approach proceeds without an approved strategy	Business Intelligence is not aligned to wider approach to continuous improvement, other strategies and the council value and behaviours	Develop strategy for approval, incorporating these factors and ensuring alignment. Sufficient engagement on strategy prior to completion.	Treat	2 x 4 = 8
Corporate Business Intelligence system is unable to meet the ambition	Data and information can't be used as envisaged to deliver ambition set out within the strategy	Learning from past two years used to inform the strategy and subsequent delivery.	Treat	2 x 3 = 6
Culture change required is not successful	Business Intelligence is not embedded across the organisation as envisaged	Culture change work stream, aligned to values and behaviours, forms an	Treat	3 x 3 = 9

Nature of risk	Consequence	Suggested control measure	Response (treat, tolerate, terminate, transfer)	Risk rating (combination of severity and likelihood)
		additional work stream within the programme. Engagement on the strategy and wider programme.		
Data sets are not accurate or is inaccessible	Data is reported in silos or requires significant manual extraction, leading to challenges in relation to staff capacity	Clear briefs are developed for each part of the programme before data is identified	Treat	2 x 3 = 6
Approved strategy is not delivered	Limited improvements to insight and improvement across the organisation	Additional resource agreed and EPMO resource allocated to delivery of strategy	Treat	1 x 4 = 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 the Business Intelligence Strategy is currently being undertaken.

Some key points noted to date -

- Business intelligence will be used to present information in a variety of ways, that are often more visually engaging than traditional reporting methods. Dashboards are developed in a way that give users more than one way of interacting with the information presented, e.g. the same

data could be viewed as a table or pie chart depending on what the user finds easier to engage with. Filtering can also be done several ways. More visual learners may prefer to click on a bar within a bar chart, whereas those who prefer to engage with larger tables of data can filter within the table.

- Business intelligence will be a key tool to help understand our customers (the residents, businesses and community of Watford). Using business intelligence tools will be used to analyse a number of different internal and external data sets to gain valuable information about the make-up of our community. As a result, the council will be better equipped to ensure services and support provided are meeting the needs of everyone, and advancing equality of opportunity between all groups.
- Business intelligence can also be used to better understand those who work for council, to help ensure all staff members are getting the support they need to thrive at work.

5.4.3 Data Protection Impact Assessment

5.4.4 Advice has been sought from the Data Protection Team at Hertfordshire County Council, who currently advise WBC for all data protection matters. It was confirmed that a DPIA is only required if the strategy deals with personal information from which an individual can be identified. There is no such information with the strategy, however as part of the implementation of the strategy reports and dashboards will be developed that could potentially surface personal information. Therefore, an assessment will be made as part of the development process for each dashboard to assess if a DPIA is needed. DPIA's have been successfully signed off by the Data Protection team for a number of dashboards already in use, including the HR dashboard, and reporting on Freedom of Information requests.

5.5 Sustainability

5.5.1 There are no sustainability implications as part of this report.

5.6 People Implications

5.6.1 The Business Intelligence Strategy will be led by the council's Intelligence, Performance and Improvement Lead and supported by project support from the Enterprise Programme Management Office. These are both existing roles. Further internal technical support in terms of delivery will be provided by the council's Digital Improvement Team allowing the council to build in-house expertise and resilience. It is also acknowledged that there will be a requirement for services from across the council to feed into the

development of information, data and its use within services. Recognising that services already have limited capacity, development of dashboards will be on a needs basis where maximum value can be added and will build on the existing KPI review and Customer Experience work already undertaken to build dashboards with valuable information, utilising data already in the system.

5.7 Community Safety/Crime and Disorder

5.7.1 There are no community safety implications from this report.

6.0 Appendices

- Appendix 1 – Business Intelligence Strategy



**WATFORD
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Business Intelligence Strategy 2023 - 2026

Foreword

Watford is a bold and visionary council, unapologetically ambitious, and always seeking to do things better. That's why I am pleased to share with you our first Business Intelligence Strategy which sets out how information will play a key role in ensuring that we continually improve services for our residents, businesses and community.

For any organisation to thrive and progress it must have a full understanding of the community it serves, the changing needs of that community, the quality of the services it delivers and what is required to address those changing needs. This is the role of the Business Intelligence Strategy which will ensure that Watford Council will be able to use its many data sources to inform its decision making.

This strategy will enable the Council to have an enhanced focus on multiple data sources in a variety of forms - including census data, customer feedback and our own processes. This will enable us to improve performance, determine service resource levels, direct contractual changes and inform service priorities so our services are not only high quality but also properly directed and efficient.

We have a vision which defines us as a council of the future, using the ever-changing tools at our disposal to remain a high performing organisation that delivers great services and positive change for our community. This strategy is a key component to enable us to achieve that vision.



Councillor Mark Watkin - Portfolio Holder for Resources

1. Introduction

“Watford is a place that thinks differently. We’re always ready to challenge perceptions and the accepted way of doing things. We’re a town and a council that believes anything is possible when it comes to achieving the best for Watford, our residents and our community.”

Elected Mayor of Watford, Peter Taylor
Watford Borough Council Plan 2022–26

Business intelligence can transform the way in which data and information is used. It can be defined as the use of technology to combine data, software tools and best practice data analytics to support more data-driven decision making. It allows organisations to learn more about customers, to monitor performance and inform decision making. In short, business intelligence gives us more information to enable us to provide the very best services to our customers; the residents, businesses and community of Watford.

This ambition is reflected in our Council Plan 2022-26 which describes our commitment to

“Deliver a step change in how we use our data and information, so it strengthens our drive for endless improvement”.

Within the framework of our values and behaviours, our Business Intelligence Strategy sets out how we will achieve our vision of an organisation driven by intelligence to meet the demands of our customers and continue to provide high quality services.

It sets out our priorities relating to the collection and management of data and, crucially, how this will be used to improve the way we work. To simply collect and present data is of limited benefit; the value of business intelligence is added when new technology, skills, partnerships and insight provide for and drive a fundamental shift in the services we provide, how we provide them and who we provide them to. Meaningful data, combined with visualisations, can help users, whether that be service heads, members or bodies such as Corporate Management Board, to gain intelligence at a glance and then take action informed by that intelligence. As such, business intelligence will be a key pillar in our continuous improvement framework.

Over the next three years, we will continue to develop our organisational culture and transform the way we use data and insight, enabling us to make better, evidence-based decisions, work more proactively, monitor performance, drive continuous improvement and rapidly respond to emerging demands and changing customer needs.

Our Business Intelligence Vision and Aims

For any change to be effective, a clear vision can help to define the improvements, innovations, new technology and ways of working essential to encouraging and gaining the commitment and support for business intelligence across the council. The right vision describes a compelling future, matches the ambition of transformational change and is bold, one of our council values.

Watford in 2026 will be....

“An information rich council which captures data accurately and efficiently and uses the insight gained from data analysis to drive performance, decision-making and transparency”

To deliver this vision, we must achieve a number of aims over the next four years. Our aims will set out how we can achieve our vision and let us know when we have fulfilled it.

As such, our use of business intelligence will facilitate new ways of working, that:

- ✦ **Enable an information-rich organisation, to pro-actively and rapidly respond to emerging customer demand.**
- ✦ **Enable rapid, evidence-based decision-making.**
- ✦ **Enable consistent delivery of more informed communications to customers.**
- ✦ **Support the council to deliver new initiatives, innovations and service improvements aligned with customer needs.**
- ✦ **Drive the development of the corporate performance framework and enable better scrutiny of council wide performance by officers and councillors.**
- ✦ **Help services to develop their use of data as a key tool to support the delivery and development of services for customers.**

In a more practical sense, the implementation of business intelligence will:

- ✦ **Enable the right information to be visible to the right people at the right time.**
For example – Creating dashboards to show when an FOI Request response is due and giving direct access to the staff members responsible for responding or monitoring responses.
- ✦ **Presenting information in a way that supports services to look ahead and plan effectively.**
For example: Dashboards are designed to show the pipeline of work. Officers monitoring complaints can filter by due date, and group cases by those due in the next 7 days.
- ✦ **Quickly and easily combine data from several different sources (internal and external) using Business Intelligence tools, providing a clearer picture of what is happening, why and what might happen next.**
For example: Planning Dashboard combines data from the back office system (applications, processing time, income, caseloads) our CRM System (FOI Requests, Complaints related to the service) and our telephony system (customer call numbers, call reason) to provide a richer picture of customer experience / service performance in one place.
- ✦ **Rapidly identify issues within processes / projects and to implement improvements**
For example: Projects dashboard allows users to identify quickly projects with amber or red status, risks or issues across the entire organisation.
- ✦ **Present large amounts of data in a visually engaging way, using dashboards and graphics to communicate information and insight at a glance.**
For example: Filters (such as Sponsor, Council Plan Theme, Portfolio Name, Council Plan Theme, Service, Lead Portfolio Holder) will enable users to view all live project work quickly and easily. Data can be viewed as tables or charts.

Our Business Intelligence Principles

We want to make use of the creative and bold thinking Watford is known for when driving performance and making key decisions. We want to report regularly on the progress of our delivery across the council so we can celebrate our successes whilst identifying areas where we could do better. To help us identify where our use of Business Intelligence can add the most value, we will use our key principles which we will guide our implementation of this strategy.

The key principles that define our use of Business Intelligence are:

- Driven by customer insight** Business intelligence will be shared and designed around outcomes for our customers, what we know about them, their journey through our services and the stages that make up that journey – our business processes. We will bring together different views of that journey from the perspectives of the customer, outcome, quality and cost and use the insight gained, in line with our Council Plan and Customer Experience Strategy, to provide an excellent customer experience for everyone who engages with the council.
- Up to date, accessible information which is collected once and used multiple times** Frequent, automated data extraction, connecting directly to source systems where possible will enable our teams to identify trends and create a better understanding of not only what is happening, and how they can best react to it, but why, and how we can plan more proactively for the future. Data should be collected once and then used multiple times as necessary, ensuring that the organisation is as efficient as possible.
- A single version of the truth** Data will be brought together and analysed using Business Intelligence tools to ensure key data sets are consistent across the organisation. We will improve the quality of our data to provide an accurate and meaningful view.
- Data to be valued as an asset to be utilised** Recognising the value of good quality data will ensure that we can trust and rely on our business intelligence when making evidence-based decisions, as an enabler for public services. It is recognised that data held individually by services can provide greater insight when combined with other information. The value of data, intelligence and analysis will be respected when storing, sharing and disposing of it, ensuring GDPR compliance.
- Deliver value quickly, then build on it** Dashboards and reports will be developed using agile methodologies to deliver knowledge and insight rapidly at low cost, then building on it. Development will be prioritised by the greatest need and where value can most quickly be added.
- Open, shared data supporting transparency** Self-service access to curated reporting dashboards will remove the need to ask others to extract and manipulate data for analysis. Working closely with our commissioned services, third-party suppliers, both operational partners and IT systems it will reduce silo working and enable services to work together more effectively.

Business Intelligence and Watford

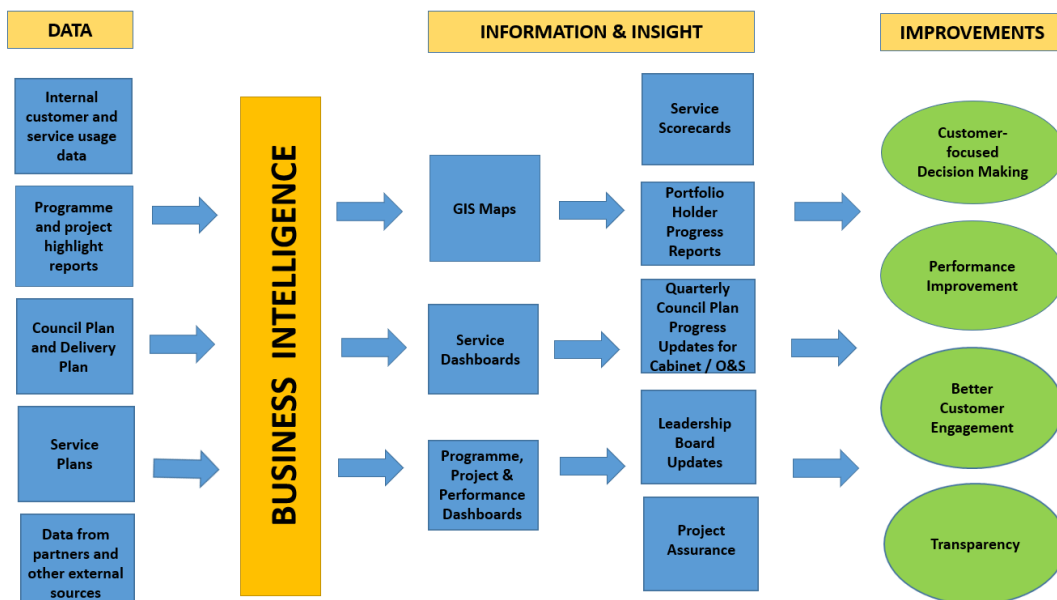
Our use of Business Intelligence cannot operate in isolation. Key to ensuring that we make the best use of the wide range of data available to the organisation will be embedding its use across the organisation.

Our Business Intelligence approach operates within the context of our corporate values and will be integral to helping us exemplify our corporate behaviours, such as ambition to make the right decisions at the right times and to consistently deliver, getting the message across about our successes and what we could do better.

As more customers choose to interact with us online, the additional data generated throughout the customer journey can be collected, analysed and used to deliver our Customer Experience Strategy; allowing us to better understand customer needs and how we can continue to improve our services to meet those needs. It can help us to understand how many customers are accessing certain contact channels, and why, allowing us to make changes to best support those who need it. It can reveal the waiting times of applications for things like council tax changes, planning or licensing so we can identify trends and adapt our resourcing accordingly. And it can provide, in near-real time, an indication of whether we are meeting our targets and, if not, what we can do differently to improve things.

A number of key customer-facing services are delivered by our partners. Working closely and collaboratively, whilst maintaining robust contract management, is vital to ensure that our commitment to high quality service delivery applies across our entire range of services. Having access to information and data on how these services are performing, and the quality of the services provided to customers via these delivery models, will subsequently be a key strand of this strategy and is reflected in the Delivery Plan.

This allows Business Intelligence to stand as a key pillar in our developing Continuous Improvement Framework, translating data into information and insight which can be used, through responding to that insight, to drive improvements across the organisation:



In addition, Business Intelligence can help to inform our strategic direction, providing valuable information from sources such as the Census, to help us understand our community and develop strategies which address the challenges faced by our town. From our Environmental Strategy and Transforming Travel in Watford Strategy, to our Economic Growth Strategy and Cultural Strategy, Business Intelligence can also help to demonstrate how we are delivering against our ambitions.

Delivering our Vision

To deliver our vision, a programme of activity will be initiated which will cement Business Intelligence as a vital part of our organisational strategy and this key business capability can provide real value to our organisation and customers.

Our programme of activity will focus on five key areas:



- **Driving Performance**

We will develop a new corporate performance framework that transforms the way performance at all levels of the Council is measured, monitored and visualised.

Data related to performance at all levels will be brought together and viewed within a single platform. This will include progress against the Council Plan, Delivery Plan, our key strategies and Service Plans as well as project and programme monitoring and internal and external KPIs from all services, including outsourced and shared services. This will create an integrated view of performance which can be reviewed with greater regularity to ensure action can be taken sooner rather than later if a change of direction or enhanced focus in a particular area is needed. Recognising the role of Business Intelligence within the council's wider ambition of continuous improvement, we will use Business Intelligence tools to build a clear picture of customer experience, which services are performing well, and which services need support.

- **Data Driven and Insight Focused**

We will develop reporting dashboards that surface additional data beyond our core KPI and Customer Experience, but which may help operational efficiencies and effectiveness or which may highlight organisational risk that requires action. We will work collaboratively across the organisation to develop dashboards iteratively using an agile development methodology, to



ensure development is undertaken in manageable steps, and flexible enough to respond to changing needs and unforeseen challenges.

One primary focus has been and will continue to be developing the Business Intelligence platform around customer experience by analysing the customer journey through all service areas.

- **Delivering Change**

Many of the characteristics of the mature levels of data analytics capability are related to the culture of the organisation rather than the technology used, such as business led data initiatives and senior management championing best practice related to the use of data.

We will therefore engage across the organisation (from our Corporate Management Board and Members to our Staff Ambassadors Group) to develop a programme of culture change which will enable the whole organisation to recognise the value of Business Intelligence and develop capabilities to exploit it as a key decision-making tool. We will work to improve data literacy across the organisation. We want staff at all levels to feel more confident when working with data and empowered when making data related decisions.

We need to ensure that Business Intelligence is something staff at all levels can connect with and the new ways of working are aligned to our new Values and Behaviours Framework. To be successful we will need a culture of collaboration and openness, breaking down departmental silos and working together to eliminate inconsistencies in data held across multiple systems, and presenting one version of the truth through a common platform.

- **Resilient**

We will ensure we have the right people and partnerships in place to support the implementation of Business Intelligence, and reduce consultancy spend on dashboard development.

We will automate data extraction where possible, reducing manual effort required from officers, and ensuring the process of refreshing reports is frequent, robust and reliable.

We will ensure the Business Intelligence tools we use are well managed, well utilised, user friendly and fit for purpose.

- **Enhancing Decision-Making**

Business Intelligence tools will be used to transform data from a wide range of internal and external sources into valuable information and insights, which will be used to support the organisation to deliver new initiatives, innovations and service improvements aligned with customer needs, and deliver more informed communications to customers.

Access to data sets will be reviewed, ensuring the right people have access to the right information at the right time, to support better decision making, whilst ensuring data is surfaced within GDPR guidelines.

Our Business Intelligence Delivery Plan

To ensure that the ambition outlined within this strategy is delivered, a clear Delivery Plan has been developed which details the specific activities to be undertaken, along with a timeline outlining when these activities will be completed. Our Business Intelligence programme will sit within the Organisational Excellence portfolio and be delivered alongside other similar programmes, such as our Customer Experience programme. The progress of the strategy's delivery will be reported via our Enterprise Programme Management Office and be included within the quarterly reports to Cabinet and Overview and Scrutiny on delivery of the Council Plan.

Business Intelligence Strategy 2022-26 Delivery Plan

Workstream 1 – Driving Performance			
What we need to do	Ref	How	By when
Develop a corporate performance framework using Business Intelligence tools to collect, analyse and present information and insights in a way that enables better scrutiny of council wide performance by officers and councillors.	10	Key Performance Indicator Review Complete (External Indicators)	Q1 2023
	11	Specification and requirements of a new external KPI App developed to be used for the analysis and presentation of all external KPI data.	Q1 2023
	12	Development of the new external KPI App.	Q2 2023
	13	Specification and requirements of a new internal KPI App developed to be used for the analysis and presentation of all external KPI data. Will enable better monitoring of service plan delivery, and link progress to the Council Plan/Delivery Plan.	Q2 2023

	14	Development of internal KPI App.	Q3 2023
	15	Implementation of Write-Back functionality , allowing select users to update dashboards directly (full audit trail)	Q3 2023
	16	Expansion of Customer Experience and Customer Contact dashboards. Will enable every customer facing service to see key customer data related to their service, such as customer contact broken down by reason, channel, number of chase calls, customer satisfaction levels, general enquiries, response times.	Q3 2023
	17	Audit of all data to inform specification and requirements for Summary Dashboards for specific groups such as Strategic Group, CMB and Portfolio Holders.	Q3 2023
	18	Creation of Summary Performance Dashboards	Q3 2023
	34	Audit of all back-office systems (to inform what we can and can't connect easily with and where development is needed.	Q1 2024
	35	Collection of third party data sets from operational deliver partners and commissioned services , aligned to a review of information and data required by these services undertaken by the Community Commissioning Team.	Q1 2024
Workstream 2 – Enhanced Decision Making			
What we need to do	Ref	How	By when

Support the organisation to deliver new initiatives, innovations and service improvements aligned with customer needs, and deliver more informed communications to customers.	19	Implementation of GovMetric customer feedback from online forms	COMPLETE
	20	Creation of Service Dashboards where they will provide clear benefit and enhance decision making. Prioritise customer facing services who have external KPIs and use the Customer Experience data as a base to expand from. This could include existing information, such as procurement and contract spend, or data not currently held within the Business Intelligence platform that could be introduced. Planning, EPMO, HR and CSC already have service dashboards, however they would benefit from review once performance dashboards have been completed.	Q1 – Q4 2024
	21	Access Review of all Reporting Apps. Business Intelligence is constantly developing and evolving alongside with services. It's essential that access to dashboards is set up in a way that ensures the right people are getting access to the right information at the right time. Initial review to be started once the council's internal Tier 4 staffing review is complete and adjustments to access made to ensure access to all reporting reflects the new arrangements. Will be reviewed every quarter.	Q2 2023
	22	Exploration of free 3rd party data available to provide insights related to our customers such as LG Inform and the Office of National Statistics. Data must be from reliable sources, accessible and current.	Q2 2023
	23	Initial review of the new Census (2021) data available, and creation of a presentation with key information about Watford residents using GIS functionality. Will include breakdown of ethnicity, age, religion by ward,	Q2 2023

		differences since the last census and comparisons with neighbouring boroughs. Can be expanded based on feedback of what Census information would be useful for services.	
	24	Creation of a Data Hub listing all data sets that have been reviewed by the Business Intelligence team, and assessed as good quality, reliable, and up to date. Will include data that is internal and external, but no personal/sensitive data relating to individuals. Data can be used to provide customer insights, plan services and design/evidence new strategies.	Q4 2023

Workstream 3 – Data-Driven and Insight Focused

What we need to do	Ref	How	By when
Help services to develop their use of data as a key tool to support the delivery and development of services for customers. Through engagement and feedback with service leads, continue to improve data quality throughout the organisation and ensure dashboards continue to evolve in line with changing services and customer needs.	25	Roll out of BI Champion model	Q1 2024
	26	Business Intelligence Officer-Sharing session	Q3 2023
	27	Establishment of drop-in clinic , particularly for Champions and Super Users	Q3 2023
	28	Development of internal resources (videos, training, latest news including GIS, data sets available (internal and external), success stories)	Q2 2024
	29	BI Feedback loop developed to ensure continuous improvement of platform	Q4 2023
	30	Updates on launch of new apps and new functionality to CMB and other key user groups such as Tier 4 Managers and Portfolio Holders.	Q3 2023

Work stream 4 – Delivering Change

What we need to do	Ref	How	By when
Engage across the organisation to develop a program of culture change which will enable the whole organisation to recognise the value of business intelligence and develop capabilities to exploit it as a key decision-making tool. Work to improve data literacy across the organisation and support staff at all levels to feel more confident when working with data and empowered when making data related decisions.	31	Implementation of Governance and Delivery Board (to be joined as and when by services involved in dashboard development)	Q2 2023
	32	Individual and small group / service training sessions offered to all users (informal, 20 – 30 minutes tailors to specific needs)	Q4 2023
	33	Tailored training for Directors / Associate Directors on use of the platform (also part of culture change work stream)	Q3 2023
Work stream 5 – Resilience			
What we need to do	Ref	How	By when
Ensure the right structure, staffing and line management arrangements in place to sufficiently support the implementation of Business Intelligence, and reduce consultancy spend on dashboard development as per savings agreed. Ensure the Business Intelligence tools we use are well managed, well utilized, user friendly and fit for purpose.	1	Arc GIS Enterprise upgrade (External and internal interactive maps)	COMPLETE
	2	Move to Firmstep Real-time Reporting Link Qlik platform to the new Real-time Reporting data base as each new process is migrated.	Q4 2023
	3	Qlik server move from Node 4 to Azure	COMPLETE
	4	Tier 4 changes implemented, providing a clearer structure of which officers need access to reporting dashboards, ensure the information is getting to the right people in a position to improve performance.	Q1 2023
	5	Movement of Digital Improvement Team to Business Intelligence to support BI platform development and build resilience, releasing BI Manager to focus on delivery of Strategy	Q1 2023

	6	Recruitment of new Digital Improvement Officer to join Digital Improvement Team and reduce reliance on external consultants	Q1 2023
	7	Training for Digital Improvement Officers to enable them to create reporting dashboards and graphics using Qlik Sense platform, and better support existing live dashboards.	Q2 2023
	8	Identify where data extraction can be automated. Review all live/planned reporting apps where data is extracted using files, to see if data extraction can be automated. Opportunity to automate data extraction for sickness, return to work interviews, annual leave, and customer contact through 8x8.	Q2 2023
	9	Replace manual data extraction with automated processes where possible. Where not possible, explore options that reduce officer time spent on producing reports to a minimum.	Q4 2023

The Business Intelligence Strategy Timeline

Year / Quarter		2023				2024				2025
Ref	Activity	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	
1	Arc GIS Enterprise upgrade (External and internal interactive maps)	Complete								
2	Move to Firmstep Real-time Reporting									
3	Qlik server move from Node 4 to Azure	Complete								
4	Tier 4 changes implemented									
5	Movement of Digital Improvement Team to Business Intelligence									
6	Recruitment of new Digital Improvement Officer									
7	Training for Digital Improvement Officers									
8	Identify where data extraction can be automated.									
9	Replace manual data extraction with automated processes									
10	Key Performance Indicator Review Complete (External Indicators)									
11	Specification and requirements of a new external KPI App									
12	Development of the new external KPI App.									
13	Specification and requirements of a new internal KPI App									
14	Development of internal KPI App.									



15	Implementation of Write-Back functionality , allowing select users to update dashboards directly (full audit trail)									
16	Expansion of Customer Experience and Customer Contact dashboards.									
17	Audit of all data to inform specification and requirements for Summary Dashboards									
18	Creation of Summary Performance Dashboards									
19	Implementation of Govemetric customer feedback from online forms	Complete								
20	Creation of Service Dashboards									
21	Access Review of all Reporting Apps.									
22	Exploration of free 3rd party data available									
23	Initial review of the new Census data									
24	Creation of a Data Hub									
25	Roll out of BI Champion model									
26	Business Intelligence Officer-Sharing session									
27	Establishment of drop-in clinic , particularly for Champions and Super Users									
30	Development of internal resources (videos, training, latest news including GIS, data sets available (internal and external), success stories)									
31	Implementation of Governance and Delivery Board									
32	Individual and small group / service training sessions offered to all users									



	(informal, 20 – 30 minutes tailors to specific needs)									
33	Tailored training for Directors / Associate Directors									
34	Audit of all back-office systems (to inform what we can and can't connect easily with and where development is needed.									
35	Collection of third party data sets from operational deliver partners and commissioned services , aligned to a review of information and data required by these services undertaken by the Community Commissioning Team.									



Appendix 1A – Existing Dashboards

Customer Experience

Sheet name	Content
Online form submissions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All online form submissions split by service, form name, contact channel (Members portal, CSC Officer, Self Service) Submission numbers over time, top 10 forms, bottom 10 forms
Face to face and email customer contact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Face to face and email contact numbers over time Filter by day, hour, channel type, service, visit reason, assistance given
Online General Enquiries	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> General enquiries split by service, enquiry type Days to respond to customer / inside or outside of SLA
Street cleansing and parks issues (Report it)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Forms submitted over time Filter by date, month, contact type, issue Interactive map showing hotspot and details of individual issues
Nuisance Reports	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Forms submitted over time Filter by date, month, contact type, issue Interactive map showing hotspot and details of individual issues
Missed Bin Reports	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Forms submitted over time Filter by date, month, contact type, issue Interactive map showing hotspot and details of individual issues
Complaints	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Open and closed complaints over time by service, cause, subject, service Easy to filter by due date Number of complaints open by service Can analyse lessons learned, compensation paid, number of complaints reclassified as service requests
FOI	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Open and closed FOIs over time by team, contact type, source (member of the public, press, private organisation) Can analyse reasons for request, responses inside/outside timescales Easy to view by due date
CSC Operations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Staff availability and call statistics Calls received by service over time Number of calls resolved Number of chase calls received for each service



Enterprise Programme Management Office

Sheet name	Content
EPMO Reports	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ability to analyse all open projects quickly and easily by service, portfolio holder, links to council themes • Can see issues and blockages at a glance by filtering on red/amber issues, risks • Budget information and changes in spend over time • Risks, issues, benefits, decisions, actions

Planning and Building Control

Sheet name	Content
Planning Applications	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of planning applications received, assigned and closed over time • Caseload split by planning officer. • Ability to see number of applications closed within set timescale per officer • Application numbers by type – Major, Minor, Other • Number of applications that required an extension • Ability to filter by date/month, case officer, extension status, planning type, application type, application number.
Pre-Applications	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number and revenue received over time • Number and revenue per case officer • Number of pre-apps published within timescales
Enforcements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of enforcements over time • Officer case load (open and closed cases by case officer) • Ability to filter all cases by date/month, enforcement type, case officer, case reference
Building Control	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of BC cases received and closed over time • Officer case load (open and closed cases by case officer) • Number of extensions granted • Number closed within timescales
Inspections	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • BC Inspections received over time • Officer case load (open and closed cases by case officer) • Ability to filter by inspection type, inspection date, case officer, application type, date/month
Enforcement Notices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of enforcement notices issued over time • Ability to filter on date/month, case officer, notice code, case reference • Officer case load, split by status notice stage • Number of appeals

Economic Development

Sheet name	Content
Additional Restrictions Grant Programme	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of projects, grant pot, amount of grant that has been committed, % of grant committed, number of expressions of interest received, number of applications approved/rejected, number of entities supported • Project analysis over time – grant spend over time vs grant available, expressions of interest received, entities supported • Amount given to each project

Park and Open Spaces

Sheet name	Content
Tree Planting Submissions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tree planting online submissions over time, split by type of tree, location type • Interactive map showing all request locations

Human Resources

Sheet name	Content
Headcount	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ability to filter headcount by date, department, gender, age, grade, employment status. • Starters/leavers data • Employee turnover
Training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Summary data of all training courses attended (mandatory and non- mandatory training) for all staff. • Ability to filter by date, department, gender, age band, employment status, training source system, course.
Mandatory Training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Individual staff records showing training required/completed/yet to be completed • Summary information with number and % of compliant employees • Number of training courses completed • % of mandatory training complete in total, and the ability to filter by date, department, gender, age, employment status
Apprentices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Apprentice numbers over time • Ability to filter by date, department, gender, age band, employment status • Current apprentice course costs • Current apprentices as a % of head count • Apprentice starters/leavers • Detail for each apprentice / employee number, start date, end date, course name, end point assessor, course duration, course cost, training provider

Sickness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Average days lost to sickness • Number of long term sick (year to date) • Number of short term sick (year to date) • Number of employees with 0 absence (year to date) • Number of trigger Points • Sickness over time • Top 5 reasons for sickness • Breakdown by department • Ability to filter by date, department, gender, age band, employment status
Salaries	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Total salary cost • Average salary • Total number of salaried staff • % of salaried head count • Analysis by department
Leave	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ability to filter by date, department, gender, age band, employment status, days, hours • Analysis by Employee/Employee Number/entitlement days, carry forward days • Average entitlement days • Average carry forward days • Total entitlement days
Return to Work Interviews	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RTW interviews completed over time, split by service • Number and % completed within timescales
Appraisals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appraisal completions split by Service, Team, Manager Name • Able to see how many appraisals are at each stage, and identify blockages • Extra logic built in to Qlik to exclude those who are not eligible for a PDR, making the completion figures more accurate

A central graphic featuring the text "Business Intelligence" in a bold, black, sans-serif font. The text is surrounded by a collection of colorful, stylized icons representing various business and technology concepts. These icons include a chess knight, puzzle pieces, a computer monitor with a cube, a group of people, a maze with a magnifying glass, a target, a lightbulb, a rocket, a globe, a handshake, a gear, a lightbulb, a globe, a rocket, a network of nodes, a handshake, a speech bubble with a checkmark, a lightbulb, a globe, and a rocket.

Business Intelligence



Part A

Report to: Cabinet

Date of meeting: Monday, 5 June 2023

Report author: Urban Design and Conservation Manager

Title: Conservation Areas Management Plan - Actions 2023-26

1.0 Summary

1.1 Local Authorities have a statutory obligation to produce and regularly review management plans for those areas that have been designated as conservation areas (Section 71 Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Areas) Act 1990). The last management plan was adopted by the Council in 2013 and suggested a review period of 5 years; this was delayed due to other priorities within the team. This document is the first review of the 2013 Management Plan. The timing of the review allows the revised plan to reflect the Council’s Delivery Plan and the new Local Plan adopted in October 2022.

1.2 The plan is presented as an Action Plan rather than a policy document which more accurately reflects the nature of the proposed actions. The actions were developed following an informal engagement stage in the summer of 2022, some detailed analysis of application received during 2013-2022 in conservation areas and internal consultation. Following this, the actions were discussed with Portfolio Holders and Corporate Management Board prior to a formal public consultation in February/March 2023 which included several public meetings to allow face to face discussion with residents from each of the conservation areas as required in the 1990 Act. The finalised set of Actions is recommended for adoption by Cabinet as an Action Plan for 2023-2026.

The actions proposed are those which were most frequently suggested by consultees and which could be delivered within the timeframe 2023-2026 (set to align with the Council Delivery Plans).

2.0 Risks

2.1

Nature of risk	Consequence	Suggested Control Measures	Response (treat, tolerate, terminate or transfer)	Risk Rating (combination of severity and likelihood)
Key Actions not taken	Residents remain unclear regarding	Ensure that the key actions are given	Treat	S=2 and L=3 so

forwards due to sufficient resources not being available.	changes which need planning permission and what would be acceptable and continue to submit inappropriate proposals or undertake work without consent	priority within the planning teams work programme		combined score is 6
Residents do not support the delivery outcomes	Residents are unhappy with changes in their area. We would have to review the result and adjust the delivery approach of similar future projects.	The level of support for the proposed actions suggests that this outcome is unlikely. Any concerns raised should be discussed with team delivering a specific project to avoid problems arising	Treat	S=2 and L=2 so combined score is 4
Stakeholders do not engage to deliver actions	The actions have limited impact and no real improvement occurs	Early engagement and a collaborative approach are used to bring stakeholders on board. In some cases, the Council may have powers which can be used to ensure some changes and works are done and the use of such powers will be considered where relevant.	Treat	S=2 and L=3 so combined score is 6

3.0 Recommendations

- 3.1 That Cabinet adopts the Conservation Area Management Plan – Actions 2023-2026 as an action plan for 2023-26 as attached at Appendix 1.

Further information:

Sian Finney-MacDonald
sian.finney-macdonald@watford.gov.uk

Report approved by: Donna Nolan, Chief Executive

4.0 Detailed proposal

- 4.1 Local authorities are required under the provisions of Section 71 of the 1990 Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Areas) Act to draw up and publish proposals for the preservation and enhancement of the conservation areas in their districts. The revised Management Plan sets out actions which will contribute to this objective for the period 2023-26 for all the conservation areas in Watford.
- 4.2 The Management Plan should be considered and used alongside the Conservation Area Appraisals for each of the conservation areas. The actions set out in this Management Plan are designed to be delivered over a three-year period and to align with the Council's Delivery Plan. The plan sets out a series of actions rather than policies or guidance and is considered to be an Action Plan rather than a Supplementary Planning Document.
- 4.3 The Plan includes actions which apply to all conservation areas and some which apply to specific conservation areas. The actions proposed have been prioritised based on the suggestions which were most frequently made and those which the Council has the resource to deliver over the three-year life of the action plan.
- 4.4 The actions proposed are set out in detail at Appendix 1 and summarised here in relation to key commitments:
- **Commitment 1: Improve access to relevant information through:**
 - improving the quality and range of the information available to residents.
 - better promotion regarding where to find relevant planning information.
 - Expanding the number of events and diversifying the audience for education events
 - **Commitment 2: Provide planning guidance for residents and businesses with shopfronts:**
 - Householder guidance for residents in conservation areas covering minor development setting out what needs planning permission as a result of Article 4 Directions; what is likely to be acceptable; and will include energy efficiency advice for older properties.

- Provide guidance for businesses with shopfronts on how they can make changes to their properties in a way which enhances the character of the conservation area.
 - **Commitment 3: General enhancements:**
 - Public realm: review how we manage public spaces in conservation areas to ensure an appropriate and consistent approach.
 - Street trees: identify suitable sites within the conservation areas for the planting of new street trees in line with the Council's tree planting programme.
 - **Area Specific Actions:**
 - **Enhance St Mary's Churchyard:** support the Council's project to help deliver enhancements to St Mary's Churchyard, in particular the condition and maintenance of heritage assets.
 - **Grove Mill:** to seek to work with the County Council to assess whether there is way to reduce traffic speeds on Grove Mill Lane and then report back to residents.
 - **Grove Mill:** to seek to engage with and support the Canal and River Trust and Hertfordshire County Council in the repair of the canal bridge railings and Grove Mill Lane.
 - **Little Cassiobury:** to seek to support Hertfordshire County Council and other partners in finding a way to restore Little Cassiobury, which is now at the highest level of risk on the Historic England register.
 - **Cemetery wall at Victoria Passage:** to support the Council in the ongoing maintenance of the boundary wall of the cemetery and Victoria Passage.
 - **Yellow lines at Watford Heath:** to work with Hertfordshire County Council to have conservation area specified no wait markings used when existing ones are to be replaced.
- 4.5 The Plan has been prepared over the last year and has involved two stages of engagement; the first an informal stage to gather views on what the key issues are and ideas regarding how we can work to resolve the issues. The second engagement stage was a more formal stage on the proposals developed after the first stage.
- 4.6 The engagement stages involved an online survey using the Both Commonplace.
- 4.7 **Formal Engagement February-March 2023:**
- 4.8 This stage included engagement events to meet the requirement in the 1990 Act regarding the need to hold public meetings where residents would have an opportunity to discuss the proposed actions and provide their feedback. A total of 5 Public Meetings and one drop-in session were held during the

formal engagement; it was not possible to hold meetings in some of the conservation areas as there were no venues available within the conservation area. Following discussions with the Portfolio holder in January 2023 it was agreed that some of the conservation areas' public meetings could be combined in the venues closest to them the table sets out the events which took place.

Conservation Area	Date and time	Venue	Meeting Format
Civic Core & Nascot	21/02/23 19:00	Annex – 3 rd Floor media lounge	Presentation and discussion
Grove Mill Lane & MacDonnell Gardens	23/02/23 19:00	Cheslyn House	Presentation and discussion
Estcourt, St Mary's & High Street/King Street	28/02/03 19:00 Drop-in session held before the main meeting from 17:00- 18:30	The Chamber Hub (Urban Room)	Presentation and discussion
Oxhey & Watford Heath	6/03/23 19:00	Bushey & Oxhey Methodist Church	Presentation and discussion
The Square	08/03/23 19:00	Cornerstone Church	Presentation and discussion

4.9 **Online Consultation:** The online consultation ran on the Commonplace platform from 3 February to 17 March 2023. The letters to conservation area residents started being received slightly earlier than expected, so to allow for all comments received, the following statistics cover the dates 1 February to 19 March 2023. An overview is provided here with the details included at Appendix 2:

- 808 visitors to the site
- 56 contributors
- 103 comments
- 46 news subscribers
- 143 visitors (17.7%) viewed 4 or more pages, so are considered 'informed'.
- The highest number of external referrals to the online consultation were from:
 - Facebook – 295 visitors, of which 22 (7.5%) responded.
 - .gov – 44 visitors, of which 4 (9.1%) responded.
 - Google – 29 visitors, of which 3 (10.3%) responded.

- LinkedIn – 14 visitors, of which 1 (7.1%) responded.
 - Out of 808 visitors to the site, only 56 (6.9%) actually responded; 47 ‘Confirmed’, 7 ‘Pending’ and 2 ‘Anonymous’.
- 4.10 More individuals completed some of the demographics questions during this consultation than during our 2022 informal engagement, but they were not completed fully or consistently enough to produce meaningful statistics. However, partial postcodes were provided by 29 individuals.
- 4.11 With 56 respondents, the maximum amount of possible responses is 728. Of these, no response was given 129 times (17.7%). However, 599 responses did indicate a level of support as follows:
- Strongly Agree – 257
 - Agree – 184
 - Neutral – 101
 - Disagree – 16
 - Strongly Disagree – 41
- 4.12 Of these 599 responses, 441 (73.6%) were positive and only 57 (9.5%) were negative. Even if ‘Neutral’ and no response options are included with the “Disagree” and “Strongly Disagree” comments, giving a total of 287 (39.4%), the majority, 441 (60.6%), are still positive. At this stage of consultation, a lack of response to a specific issue was likely because the respondent was not personally affected by it, rather than necessarily thinking it was unimportant. This is suggested by the lack of responses to area-specific issues, like those at Grove Mill Lane.
- 4.13 **Public meetings and Drop in session**
- 4.14 The public meeting sessions were made as informal and welcoming as possible. The presentation provided a background into what the designation of conservation areas is intended to achieve, as well as explaining concepts they are reliant on, such as ‘character’. The main body of the presentation covered the individual actions, whilst welcoming questions from those attending. When the presentation ended, we welcomed further questions on heritage subjects and occasionally had the opportunity to show how the areas had developed using old maps. Some additional presentations had been prepared on more contentious subjects, such as new build in conservation areas, which were presented and discussed as required.
- 4.15 Each meeting received or exceeded the number of expected attendees, and the events seemed very well received. The actions appeared to be well understood and received support during the both the public meetings and drop-in session; the proposed provision of additional information for householders wishing to undertake minor works was clearly popular.

4.16 It should be noted that most of the discussions that took place related to technical issues that would be answered by improved guidance, or specific heritage planning issues outside the scope of this consultation. Detailed comments and issues raised during the public meetings are included at Appendix 3.

4.17 **Key conclusions:**

- The proposed actions were all supported by a clear majority of those who responded. The level of support received, in both the online consultation and public meetings, reinforces that the actions proposed are appropriate for inclusion in a new Conservation Areas Management Plan.
- In the online consultation, positive sentiments (“Agree” and Strongly Agree”) made up less than 50% of the responses received only for those actions proposed at Grove Mill Lane and Watford Heath. However, in these examples, they were outweighed by “neutral” or no response options, rather than negative sentiments. This is almost certainly due to the relatively small populations of those areas, along with their peripheral locations.
- Both the online consultation and the public meetings highlighted the benefit of easier access to information for those living in conservation areas, both through specific requests, but also the misunderstandings present in some comments. Some of the issues raised about consistency in both planning and enforcement would likely be explained, if not outright avoided in the first place, by the proposed provision of clear guidance and explanatory information.
- Concern was raised about the awareness of conservation area status and restrictions by residents new to the areas. The possibility of installing roundels or other signage to identify conservation areas was raised several times. This is an issue that will need further consideration in the future, but the possibility of including links to explanatory information within property search results has already been discussed.
- Comments show that new development and tall buildings continue to be contentious throughout the Borough, particularly where they affect conservation areas; this is very unlikely to change. However, the Council now have additional tools, such as the new Local Plan and Design Review Panel, which should help ensure higher design standards for new properties in the future. Improved guidance on design for new buildings in conservation areas may assist residents,

and designers of new properties, in understanding what could be considered appropriate in such locations.

- Concerns were also raised about the siting, installation and potential maintenance requirements of any new street trees. These are largely technical issues that can be resolved internally, and it should be noted that the addition of new trees was otherwise widely supported.
- Several comments were received relating to issues out of our direct control, but that do affect the character of conservation areas; these were usually highways issues, either with regards to traffic levels or safety. Issues of this nature will be raised with the relevant authority; usually HCC.

One recurring theme in the comments received was that the Council does not appear to value the heritage assets and character of the town. It is hoped that by progressing with the proposed actions we can help show that this is not the case.

The draft Management Plan is attached at Appendix 4

5 Implications

5.1 Financial

5.1.1 The Shared Director of Finance comments that there are no direct financial implications arising from this report. The actions can be delivered within existing staff and budget arrangements.

5.2 Legal Issues (Monitoring Officer)

5.2.1 The Group Head of Democracy and Governance comments that there are no direct legal implications from this report. The consultation on the Management Plan Actions has been carried out in accordance with the provisions of the 1990 Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act.

5.3 Equalities, Human Rights and Data Protection

5.3.1 The Management Plan applies to all the conservation areas in the town. The actions include providing better access to information about conservation areas, the benefits which accrue from living in a conservation area and any restrictions which may apply along with the provision of householder guidance on what needs planning permission and what is likely to be acceptable. These were requested by many respondents to the two stages of engagement.

The approach to the engagement sought to ensure that all sectors of the community had the opportunity to engage with the formulation of the actions set out in the management plan. We will consider how we consult on further guidance and will take measures to ensure that all sectors of the community are aware of where to find information and help when they need it; internal advice on this will be taken.

Data Protection 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.

5.4 **Staffing**

- 5.4.1 The management plan proposes a number of actions which will require staff resources to deliver. The actions proposed can be delivered within existing staff resources subject to existing staff remaining in post.

5.5 **Accommodation**

- 5.5.1 There are no impacts on accommodation.

5.6 **Community Safety/Crime and Disorder**

- 5.6.1 The management plan proposals will not directly impact on community safety or crime and disorder. In developing guidance notes and undertaking projects these matters will be considered on a case by case basis and where appropriate specific guidance on these issues will be included in the documents produced.

5.7 **Sustainability**

- 5.7.1 The management plan proposes to produce guidance for residents regarding minor changes they may wish to make to their properties in conservation areas. Many of these properties were constructed prior to 1900 and use traditional materials and construction methods. One area residents have expressed that they would like clear guidance on is how to improve the energy efficiency of their properties and it is intended to prioritise this guidance note. The guidance produced will set out the benefits of retaining existing fabric where possible and repairing and upgrading it rather than replacing it which in whole carbon lifecycle terms uses the least carbon. The guidance will also recommend ways of upgrading buildings in terms of energy efficiency without losing original fabric.

Appendices

Appendix 1 Proposed Actions

Appendix 2 Levels of Support and Comments

Appendix 3 Comments made at Public Meetings

Appendix 4 Draft Plan

Background papers

No papers were used in the preparation of this report.

Appendix 1 - Conservation Areas Management Plan Review: Proposed Actions for Formal Engagement 3rd February-17th March 2023

Proposed general actions for consultation:

General Actions	How we will do this	Time frame	Resources required	Comments – how this addresses consultation responses
1 Improve access to information	<p>1A Provide better information on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • conservation areas • Article 4 Directions • Planning process and decision making • How to contact council on planning related conservation matters • How fees are set • Pre-application • How enforcement process works on website and in downloadable format 	0-9 months	Officer time in conservation and planning teams to draft pages and web team support to amend website.	A common theme in responses was that residents were not aware of the conservation areas and did not know how to find out more. Information is available already so could be updated and expanded and then made easier to find on the website. (Council Delivery Plan Working for our Community and serving our residents Theme 1 – Outstanding Customer Experience action 1)
	<p>1B Promote where to find information on website through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social media platforms • WBC newsletter to all households. • Local notice boards and FB groups 	0-6 months and BAU	Officer time in conservation and planning teams along with Communications team support.	We worked successfully with teams across the council to promote the informal engagement and would build on these relationships going forwards. (Council delivery Plan Theme 1 Pioneer new ways of working action 1)
	1C education events with schools and young people and other community groups	6-9 months and then BAU	Officer time from conservation team	This would be resourced from planning teams building on the two schools meetings we did in 2022. Aim to do additional meetings as resources allow.

General Actions	How we will do this	Time frame	Resources required	Comments – how this addresses consultation responses
2 Provide planning guidance for residents and businesses in conservation areas	2A Householder guidance to cover minor development and provide clarity regarding what needs planning permission and then what is likely to be acceptable; to include renewable energy installations such as solar panels and EV charging points	6-18 months	Officer time in conservation teams and planning DM team. This will save us time later as both officers and residents/applicants will be better informed	In the consultation this came out as being a really important way in which residents felt the Council could help them- it will also help the planning team to be more efficient and effective. (Council delivery Plan Theme 1 Outstanding Customer Service action 1)
	2B Provide guidance for businesses on how to make minor changes to their properties in a way which enhances the character of the conservation area.	12-24 Months	Officer time and graphic design cost to refresh existing guidance	Several of the conservation areas have ground floor retail/F&B uses and other A class uses and many units would benefit from a more sympathetic approach to signage and shopfront design (supports Delivery Plan Theme 3 in terms of enhancing the attractiveness of Watford as a place for businesses and in terms enhancing the outdoor public spaces.
3 General Enhancements	3A Review our approach to public realm management in conservation areas to ensure an appropriate and consistent approach.	12-36 months	Officer time and link in with WBC Transport & Infrastructure team and HCC	Advocate principles set out in Historic England Streets for all document as we develop proposals for public realm works in conservation areas. (Council Delivery Plan Theme 3 distinctive and successful neighbourhood Action 4)

	3B Work with team delivering tree planting across the Borough to find suitable locations within the conservation areas for street trees.	6-12 months and ongoing as per Council annual programme	Make use of existing project in the delivery plan to enhance the conservation areas.	Following a discussion with the Associate Director for Environment, this can be accommodated into the annual tree planting provision but we would have to agree where trees are to be planted (Council Delivery Plan Greener Brighter Future Theme 2 Biodiversity action 2)
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Area Specific Enhancements for consultation:

St Mary's:

Action	How we will do that	Time Frame	Resources required	Comments
Enhance the quality of the churchyard	Support a cross council group to deliver enhancements to this part of the conservation area including those which are more specifically related to the condition and maintenance of the heritage assets.	To fit in with the project plan for this project	Officer time to support the project team	This is a specified project in the delivery plan and involves the most sensitive heritage assets in the town (Delivery Plan Theme 3 Distinctive and Successful Places Action 4).

Grove Mill:

Action	How we will do that	Time Frame	Resources required	Comments
Review with partners whether there is a way of reducing traffic speeds on Grove Mill Lane and report back	Explore the possible options with Hertfordshire County Council (HCC) and other relevant parties and report back.	6-18 months	Staff time to engage with HCC and others and then if there are viable options we can review how these may be funded.	Initial contact made with HCC.

Support canal and river trust to seek repair of railings on canal bridge by Canal Cottage	Approach both Canal and River Trust (CRT) and HCC as this is a road bridge as well and explore options for repair and report back on options	6-18 months	Staff time to engage with CRT to explore options and then review how any viable options may be funded.	
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Civic Core:

Action	How we will do that	Time Frame	Resources required	Comments
Little Cassiobury continue to support HCC and other partners to find a way of restoring Little Cassiobury which is now placed at the highest risk level by Historic England on their register	Continue dialogue with HCC and Historic England and other partners to find a way forwards	ongoing	Staff time	Part of the Council's Buildings at Risk work but the property is the most significant building in the conservation area and is in very poor condition. We are waiting for up to date reports from Historic England following a site visit in autumn 2022

The Square:

Action	How we will do that	Time Frame	Resources required	Comments
Ensure that the boundary wall of the cemetery and Victoria Passage is properly maintained	Work with AD for Environment to ensure the boundary wall onto Victoria Passage is repaired and maintained			Discussion with colleagues

Watford Heath

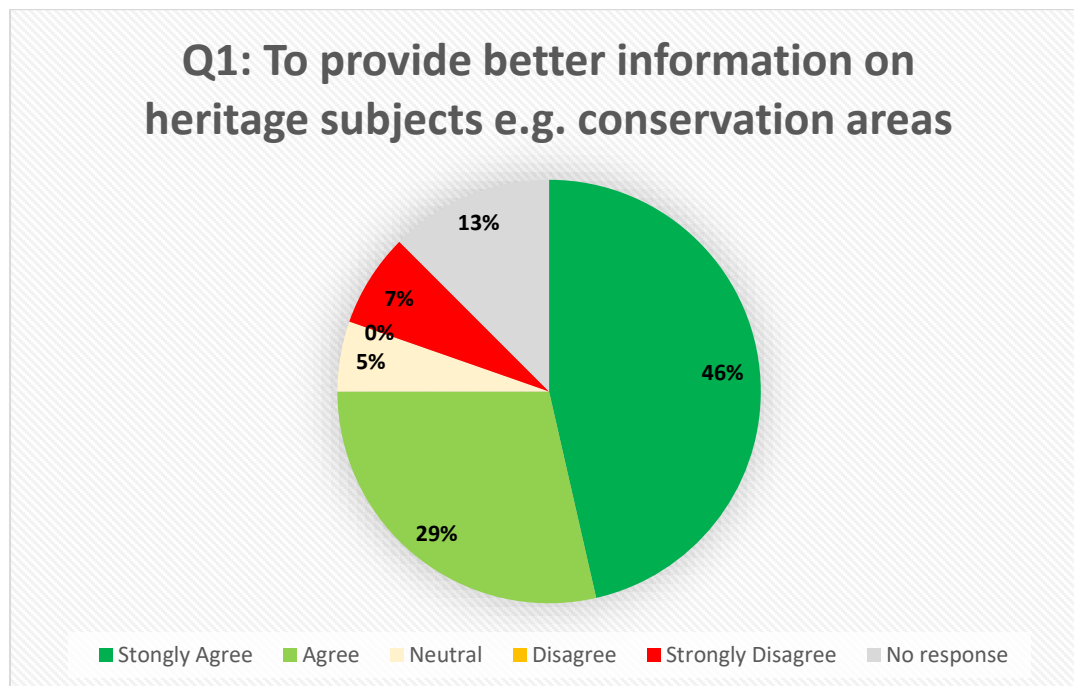
Action	How we will do that	Time Frame	Resources required	Comments
Conservation area specified "no wait" markings	Agree this with HCC and explore options and timeframes with WBC Transport and Infrastructure and parking teams.			This location more than most would benefit from this as the standard yellow lines are intrusive to the character of the area.

Appendix 2 - Levels of Support and Comments by Proposed Action

The following section provides details on the level of support for each proposed action, as well as any comments received relating to it. These were received during the Commonplace online consultation, which ran from 3 February to 17 March 2023. The letters to conservation area residents started to be received slightly earlier than expected, so to allow for all comments received the following statistics cover the dates 1 February to 19 March 2023.

Each page of the consultation had a question and a comment box. The pages were prefixed by the phrase “Do you think we should include the following actions in our new Conservation Areas Management Plan? Please show your level of support by selecting an icon from happy to sad”. Five levels were selectable, from happy, which was linked to “Strongly Agree”, through to sad, which was linked with “Strongly Disagree”.

Q1 - To provide better information on subjects such as conservation areas, Article 4 Directions, the planning process and decision making, how to contact the Council on conservation matters related to planning, how fees are set, pre-application, how the enforcement process works.



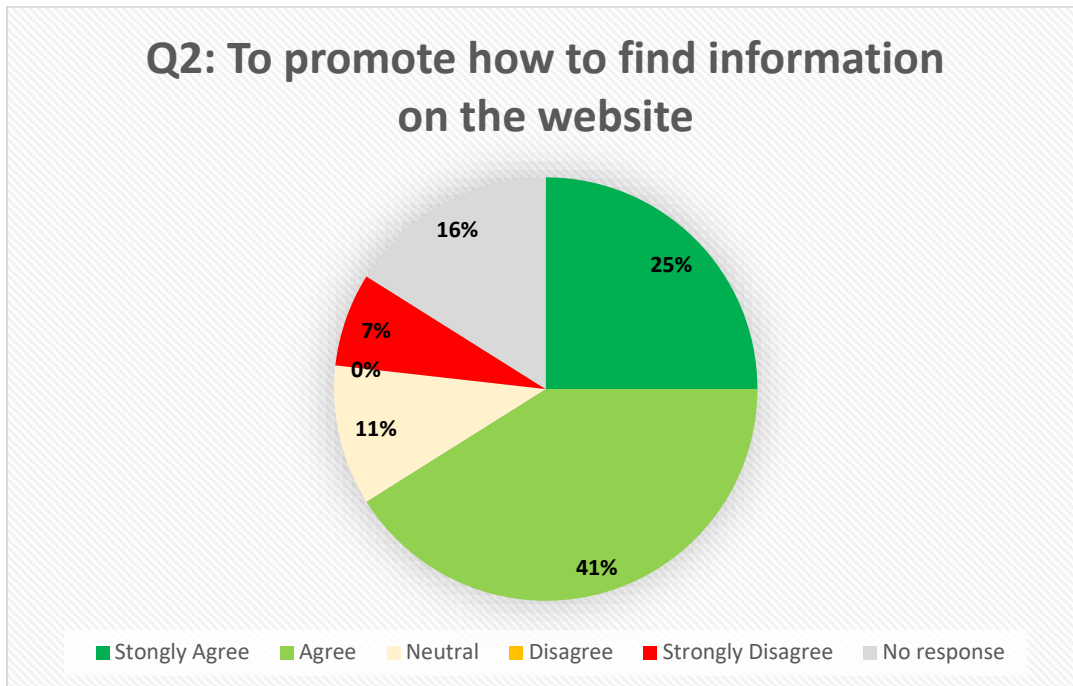
Strongly Agree	26
Agree	16
Neutral	3
Disagree	0
Strongly Disagree	4
No response	7

Respondent ID	Status	Level of Support	Comment
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6315b2faf0e55600135cecc1	confirmed	Strongly Agree	esp wrt solar panels and other environmentally friendly changes
63dcbbb8048a5600183fcfeb	confirmed	Strongly Agree	General guidance on what is appropriate and consistency of decisions on topics like loft conversions, porches, window replacements would be good
632d708a8aadeb001310ffe2	confirmed	Agree	Not sure if this is an 'urban myth' but in a conservation area do you need planning permission to change the colour when exterior painting? Can you paint the original, in many cases the Victorian/Edwardian colours, without planning permission? What is conservation in this case?
63dd419ca0a2f40019dac40a	confirmed	Strongly Agree	<p>Yes have recently been through this process to change windows and door. Being directed to Historic England website unhelpful, as not clear what applies to a listed building vs. conservation area etc.</p> <p>Also added unnecessary stress to process of not knowing whether application would be approved or not. Such uncertainty is also unhelpful when thinking about other works. For example, if loft conversions are never going to be allowed, then just say that I am aware many residents are trying repeatedly to get these through (unsuccessfully as far as I can tell). Rather than letting that process play out, just say it's never going to happen so that new and existing homeowners know where they stand.</p> <p>Finally, clearer rules would also help with understanding seemingly inconsistent decisions being made. For example, existing families in Oxhey Village are not able to build loft conversions (despite many existing in the area from preconservation days), but a developer is allowed to build a set of new houses next to Keyser Hall... Seeing the workings here would be helpful.</p>
63eb36c0f24c9000198b257d	pending	Strongly Disagree	As normal council do what they want to

63f0dd6d8c3a56001915ce26	confirmed	Agree	You talk about trees. There has to be a process where if trees are planted they are looked after for at least several years so they are properly established. Trees at trade city have been cut down to hedge height not left to grow to full size trees as per the planning. Look at the dead trees in Clarendon Rd
6400db2639131c0018117ee e	confirmed	Strongly Disagree	If it involves retaining The One Crown whilst putting 28 Storeys by the Junction station with 1200 flats and only 200 parking spaces and no changes to infrastructure it's a big Neddly No NO!
6401020e93670d001980088 1	confirmed	Strongly Agree	It is important to retain and preserve all the remaining historic properties in Watford
640354582e82f90019c28493	confirmed	Neutral	Hard to say when you don't identify the areas
6405d5c2a02a8d0019d10f4e	confirmed	Strongly Agree	This is probably the most critical change along with point 2. It also needs to be ongoing and not a one off people moving into the conservation areas in the future need to be provided this information.
6412e032e432360019e7c68 1	confirmed	Strongly Agree	Why have you posted photos of areas/buildings not on the list? Shouldn't you already be maintaining the areas on the list? You should already be issuing information about what you are doing with money appropriated by the council which should include maintaining conservation areas.
64142d85e30c4f00193f83ab	confirmed	Neutral	I'm not sure only providing generic information will be enough. The significant fees to submit a planning application should include a planning officer inspecting the specifics of the property, including how the proposed changes will fit within the surrounding houses and improve the quality of life of the families looking to grow with their property.
63db86ac689cef0019ac249e	confirmed	Strongly Agree	Clear guidance is required, especially when a newer built (like 60s and onward) isn't subject to planning permission (not part of Article 4), this should be clearly explained to avoid hefty application fees. The guidance should be free of charge.

Q2 - To promote how to find information on website through social media, the "About Watford" newsletter, local notice boards and Facebook groups.

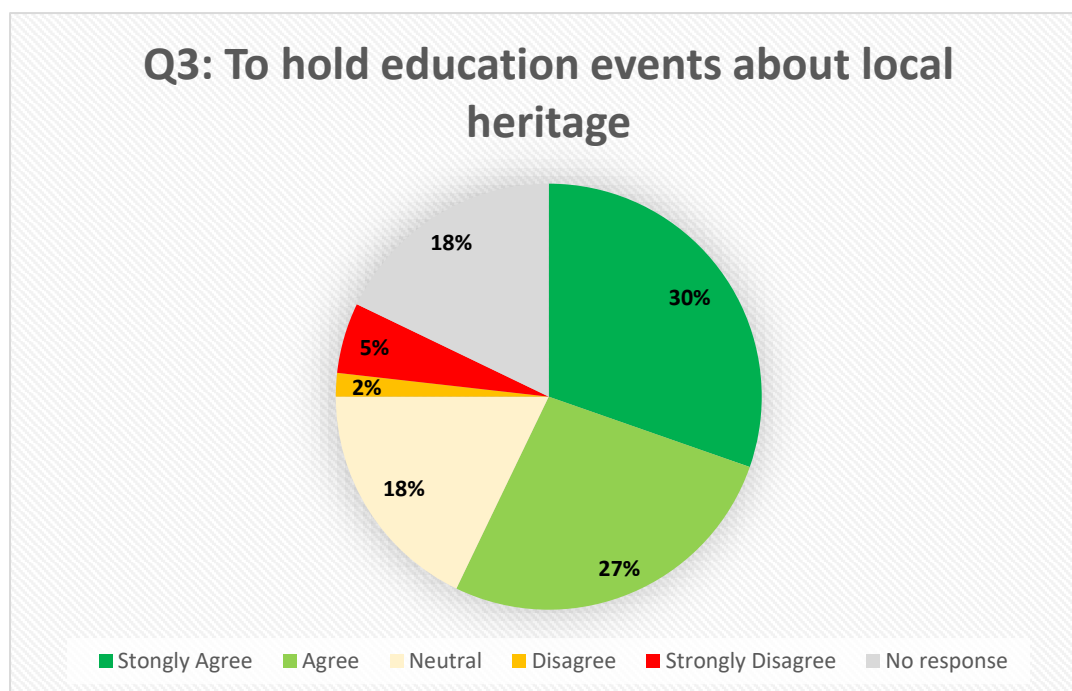


Stongly Agree	14
Agree	23
Neutral	6
Disagree	0
Strongly Disagree	4
No response	9

Respondent ID	Status	Level of Support	Comment
6315b2faf0e55600135cecc1	confirmed	Strongly Agree	currently difficult to find info or be able to discuss with trained Council officer
63dce379df770a001866733f	confirmed	Neutral	Make it easy also for those of us that do not use social media
6405d5c2a02a8d0019d10f4e	confirmed	Neutral	Not everyone uses social media, even if they use the internet, and a significant minority of people don't use either because they are digitally excluded or lack skills/confidence.

6412e032e432360019e7c68 1	confirmed	Strongly Agree	<p>Why have you posted photos of areas/buildings not on the list? Shouldn't you already be maintaining the areas on the list?</p> <p>You should already be issuing information about what you are doing with money appropriated by the council which should include maintaining conservation areas.</p>
63db86ac689cef0019ac249e	confirmed	Strongly Agree	<p>The more the better (info wise). When I navigate via the Watford website, it simply redirects me to the "planning permission" website, or to book a consultation session with council (but with a fee). There was no fee before, and I believe it was better to get free guidance (until 2019).</p>

Q3 - To hold education events about local heritage with schools and other community groups.

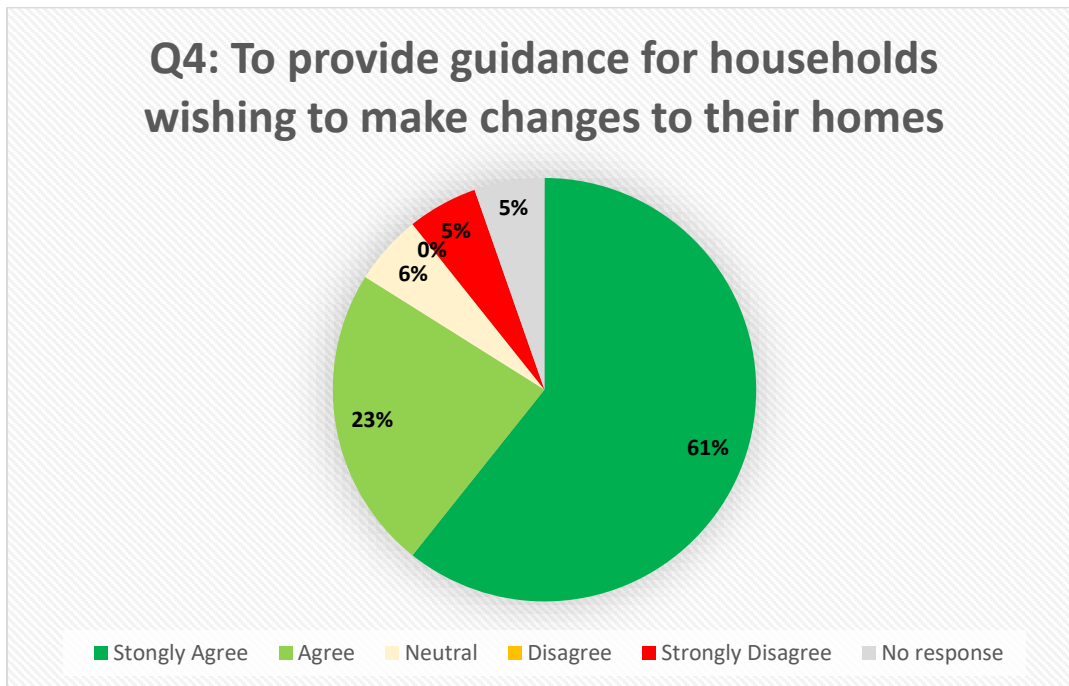


Strongly Agree	17
Agree	15
Neutral	10
Disagree	1
Strongly Disagree	3
No response	10

Respondent ID	Status	Level of Support	Comment
6315b2faf0e55600135cecc1	confirmed	Strongly Agree	excellent idea
63f0dd6d8c3a56001915ce26	confirmed	Agree	Local heritage is as much about the 1940s 50s as the 17 or 18 50s. Look how few nice front gardens remain most just car parks. Sun clock tower what is so difficult about using the money from sun printers that was paid to restore the clock 25 years ago?? Around the back of Leavesden Rd there are still a few outside toilets. Just as much social history as the town hall.
6400db2639131c0018117ee	confirmed	Agree	If there is any point?
640354582e82f90019c28493	confirmed	Neutral	Is anyone actually interested?
6405d5c2a02a8d0019d10f4e	confirmed	Neutral	Interesting but not critical to residents understanding the legal limitations on what they can and can't do.

6339f5bcd0901b001358248 5	confirmed	Neutral	Close down our conservation area (Oxhey Village), has not achieved what was promised and stop new buildings in back gardens, but allows council officers to interfere with paint colour of doors. Not what we were promised.
6412e032e432360019e7c68 1	confirmed	Strongly Agree	Why have you posted photos of areas/buildings not on the list? Shouldn't you already be maintaining the areas on the list? You should already be issuing information about what you are doing with money appropriated by the council which should include maintaining conservation areas.
63db86ac689cef0019ac249e	confirmed	Strongly Agree	It's worth having these kind of sessions indeed

Q4 - To provide guidance for households wishing to make changes to their homes, on subjects such as what may and may not need planning permission, household maintenance, energy efficiency, renewable energy installations including solar panels and EV charging points.



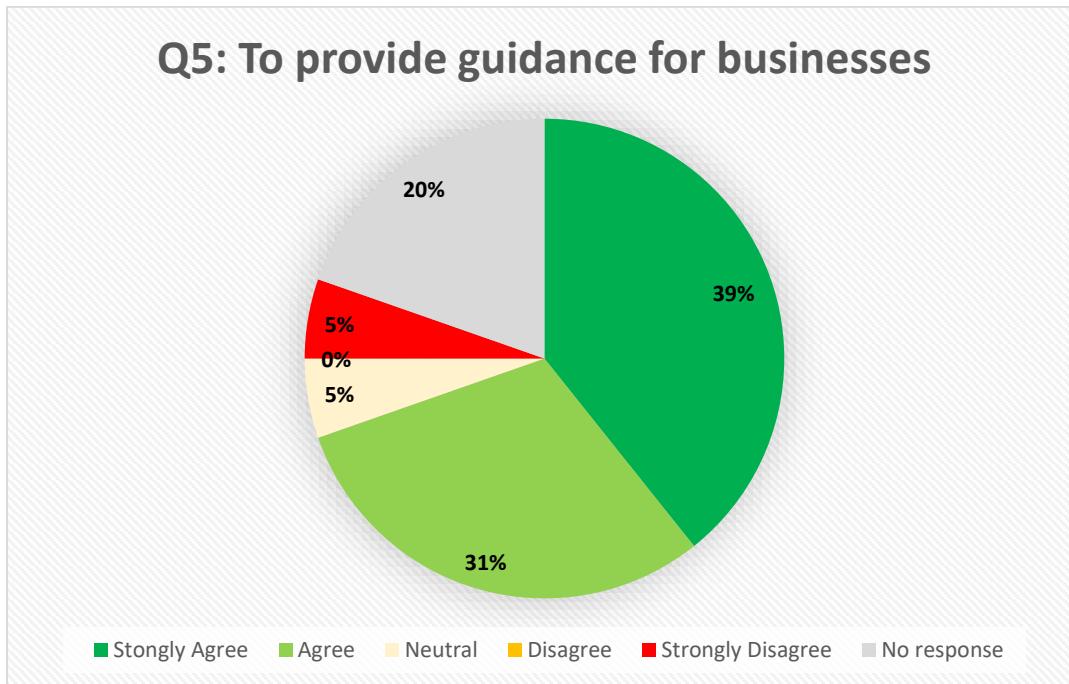
Strongly Agree	34
Agree	13
Neutral	3
Disagree	0
Strongly Disagree	3
No response	3

Respondent ID	Status	Level of Support	Comment
63dbcdc98d07f00019531501	confirmed	Strongly Agree	<p>Its really difficult to know what we can do and understand the process of how to request a change.</p> <p>Council should work with home owners and not put unnecessary restrictions/ requirements that increase cost of work significantly.</p>

63dbdc31135c4d00198875de	confirmed	Strongly Agree	Especially new residents. A pack should be provided about what a resident can and can't do to their house. Made clear what features of their house must be preserved and need permission to make any proposed changes. Biggest problem is council policy. There have been many occasions when residents have broken the rules e.g. taken out Victorian features, such as ornated cladding, window pillars, windows and applied thick cladding covering Victorian features. Residents who make a change without permission, are told off by the council, but when they appeal they are usually allowed to keep the change. What is the point of having rules if the council do not follow through policy and stop this from happening??
63dce379df770a001866733f	confirmed	Strongly Agree	Include TPOs on this list and who has the right to lay down individual or blanket TPOs. Brick walls in conservation areas must be safely maintained and maybe a council grant for the same as it is expensive these days
63df9352a7b6ef001963664d	confirmed	Strongly Agree	Including securing their property by adding gates etc.
63eb36c0f24c9000198b257d	pending	Strongly Disagree	You cannot paint your doors or windows without someone in the council telling you what you can do when you have paid for it with your own money
640354582e82f90019c28493	confirmed	Strongly Agree	Obviously
6405d5c2a02a8d0019d10f4e	confirmed	Strongly Agree	Again, new residents moving in need to be made aware of this information or they won't know to look for it.
6412e032e432360019e7c681	confirmed	Strongly Agree	Why have you posted photos of areas/buildings not on the list? Shouldn't you already be maintaining the areas on the list? You should already be issuing information about what you are doing with money appropriated by the council which should include maintaining conservation areas.

64142d85e30c4f00193f83ab	confirmed	Agree	This is needed although a case by case approach should be taken, taken into consideration surrounding properties.
63db86ac689cef0019ac249e	confirmed	Strongly Agree	I think that this is important, would be good if each household in conservation areas were informed about Article 4 and whether their house is concerned about the Article 4 or not

Q5 - To provide guidance for businesses on how to make minor changes to their properties in a way that helps enhance conservation areas.

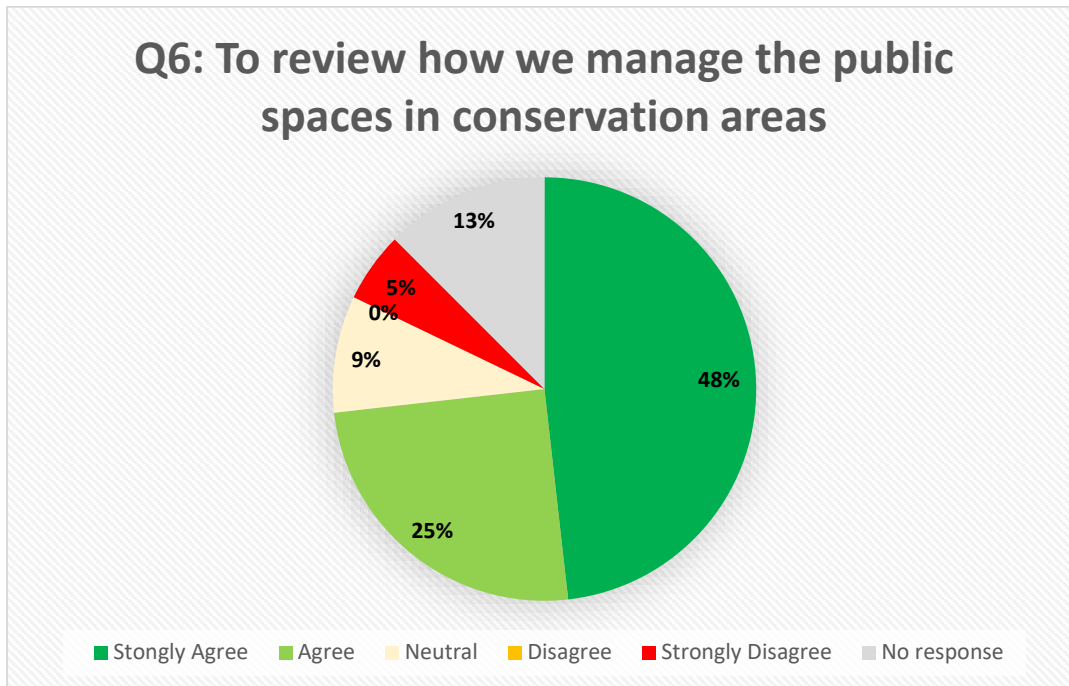


Strongly Agree	22
Agree	17
Neutral	3
Disagree	0
Strongly Disagree	3
No response	11

Respondent ID	Status	Level of Support	Comment
63eb36c0f24c9000198b257d	pending	Strongly Disagree	They should help the little business with grants
6412e032e432360019e7c681	confirmed	Strongly Agree	Why have you posted photos of areas/buildings not on the list? Shouldn't you already be maintaining the areas on the list? You should already be issuing information about what you are doing with money appropriated by the council which should include maintaining conservation areas.
63db86ac689cef0019ac249e	confirmed	Strongly Agree	Guidance (ideally free of charge) is always welcome. Also, local tradesmen need to know the basics as when they are asked about it, would be good to get an informed view from them prior to commencing any work

635d169e086fca00193a31f4	confirmed	Strongly Agree	Yes, but also ensure nondomestic/businesses know when planning is required and consult residents. I have to put up with a nursery school having taken over the church/community hall all year round and converted the garden area to a horrid blue playground, and masses of almost constant other activities in the church and hall and related parking (mostly inconsiderate) issues
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Q6 - To review how we manage the public spaces in conservation areas, to ensure an appropriate and consistent approach.

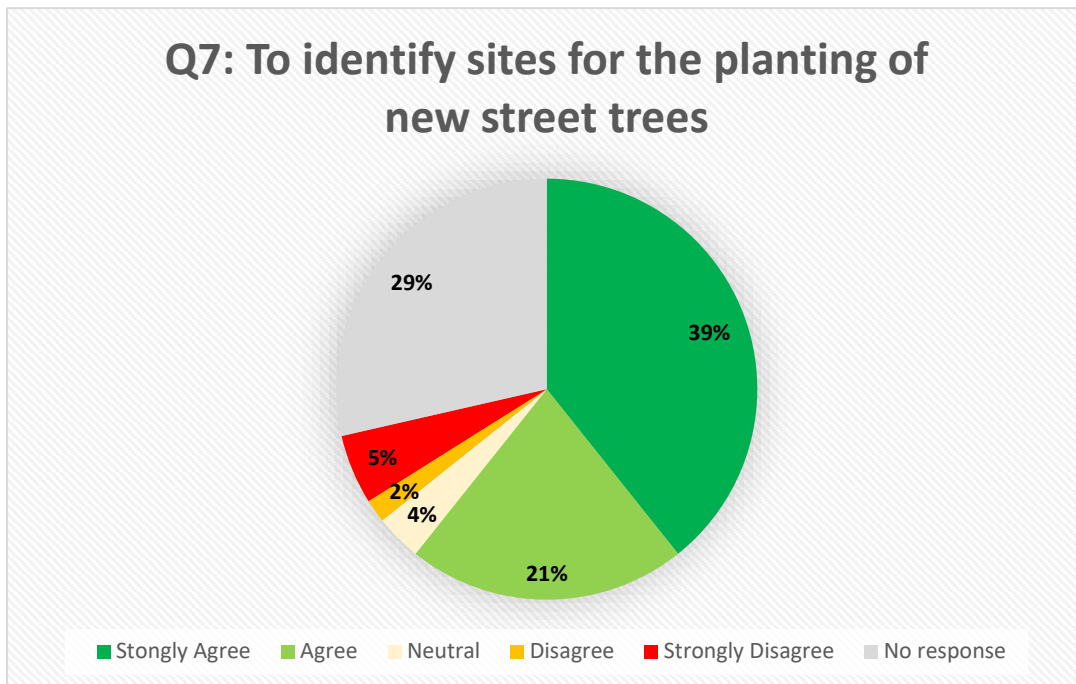


Stongly Agree	27
Agree	14
Neutral	5
Disagree	0
Strongly Disagree	3
No response	7

Respondent ID	Status	Level of Support	Comment
63dd419ca0a2f40019dac40a	confirmed	Strongly Agree	Linked to this, I think a key part of this plan should be how traffic is managed and reduced in conservation areas. I have Oxhey Village in mind here in particular: given all the rules are about preserving the character of the area, I cannot believe that having hundreds of cars pile down Villiers Road every morning and evening to avoid the traffic on Pinner Road in any way enhances or preserves the character of the village in fact it quite clearly does the opposite. A serious traffic reduction plan i.e. through making the road one way/no entry at one end would enhance the area no end.

63ea6836f24c9000198b1fc0	confirmed	Strongly Agree	Some ugly things are included in the Conservation area. Improvements shouldn't be excluded for the sake of preservation.
63eb36c0f24c9000198b257d	pending		No work gets done unless the council office lives there
64103982f00e61001a5e2b4e	pending	Agree	Should work with local residents to see how public (especially green) spaces can be improved
6412e032e432360019e7c681	confirmed	Strongly Agree	Why have you posted photos of areas/buildings not on the list? Shouldn't you already be maintaining the areas on the list? You should already be issuing information about what you are doing with money appropriated by the council which should include maintaining conservation areas.
63db86ac689cef0019ac249e	confirmed	Neutral	I think that some of the rules should be relaxed about the "paint", window replacement, and other minor changes to ensure that to achieve a better look or better energy efficiency shouldn't mean additional preconsultation and planning permission fees which are easily reaching out to £300+ bracket for a simple change

Q7 - To identify suitable sites within conservation areas for the planting of new street trees.



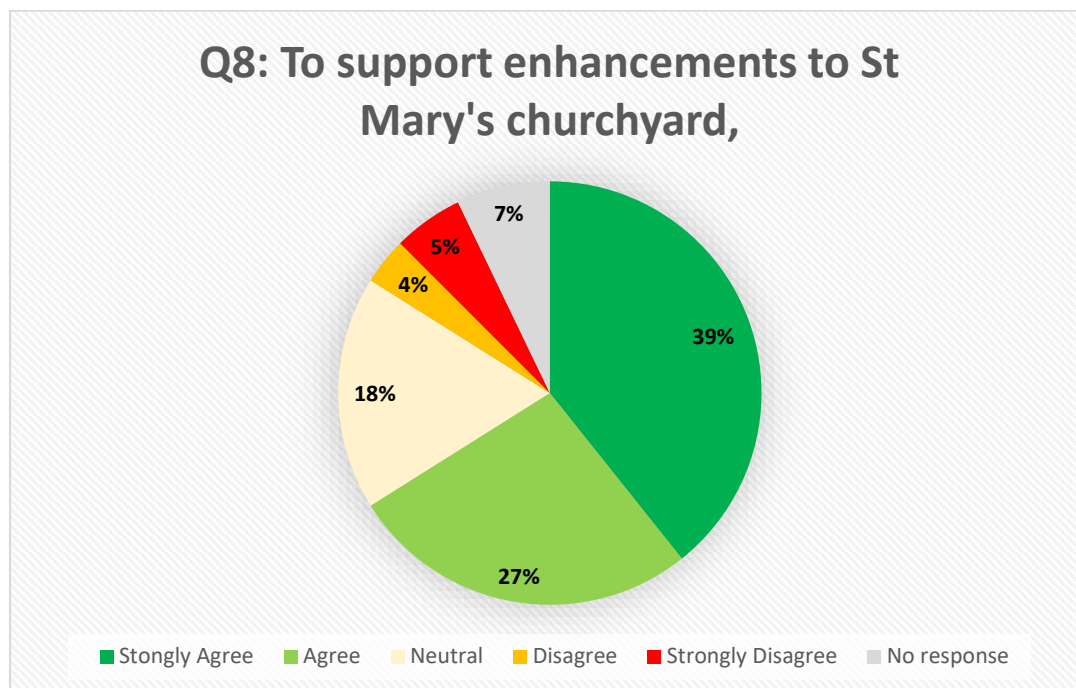
Stongly Agree	22
Agree	12
Neutral	2
Disagree	1
Strongly Disagree	3
No response	16

Respondent ID	Status	Level of Support	Comment
63dce379df770a001866733f	confirmed	Agree	Watford pavements are badly maintained in the Nascot conservation area. New trees only if roots don't make this worse in future. New trees will require more frequent clearing of leaves in Autumn. Make sure you build this in.
632d708a8aadeb001310ffe2	confirmed	Agree	Trees were planted by WBC some years ago in the Oxhey conservation area. Residents were assured that they would not grow to become overwhelming. This has not been the case. Tree management both from a height and root point of view is difficult. Choose with care!
63dd419ca0a2f40019dac40a	confirmed	Strongly Agree	This should include consideration of whether wheelchairs/pushchairs can get past.

6334227dd2e3600013473bd 3	confirmed	Disagree	The street trees invariably lead to disruption of the footway both by impeding the walk way and breaking up the surface. They often lead to messy fruit causing dirty footwear. We have enough disruption of the walk way by the street signage and furniture.
63f0dd6d8c3a56001915ce26	confirmed	Strongly Agree	As before plant trees but look after them with hot dry summers you have to water them for probably a couple of years . They get planted in key hole size openings in pavements so little chance of much natural water.
64103982f00e61001a5e2b4 e	pending	Agree	Residents should be consulted beforehand.
6412e032e432360019e7c68 1	confirmed	Strongly Agree	Why have you posted photos of areas/buildings not on the list? Shouldn't you already be maintaining the areas on the list? You should already be issuing information about what you are doing with money appropriated by the council which should include maintaining conservation areas.

63db86ac689cef0019ac249e	confirmed	Strongly Disagree	<p>The more trees are on the streets, the more leaves are gathered on the parking spaces, and on the roofs of the nearby houses. It is also considered as a hazard by insurance companies if the house has near to it a big tree. In addition, the street pavements (such as Oxhey Village ones) are already narrow in some places, even without a tree (due to trees or some green fences which went wild) hence my reticence to try to introduce new trees. Instead, the council should avoid building new flats (Bushey Car Wash, Green Belt, etc.) and plant trees on these spaces (instead of building new flats). It's interesting that richer councils like St Albans (in Hertfordshire) seems to be exempt from heavily building new flats and social housing. Note that Watford is very densely populated and the current infrastructure isn't enough (schools, parking spaces, roads, water, etc. GPs are already overburdened). Note that the "housing targets" are introduced by the Lib Dem and Tory coalition hence not sure why the Council (Lib Dems) keeps complaining about the central government, rather than updating their manifesto or apologising for introducing such an ambitious law with Tories.</p>
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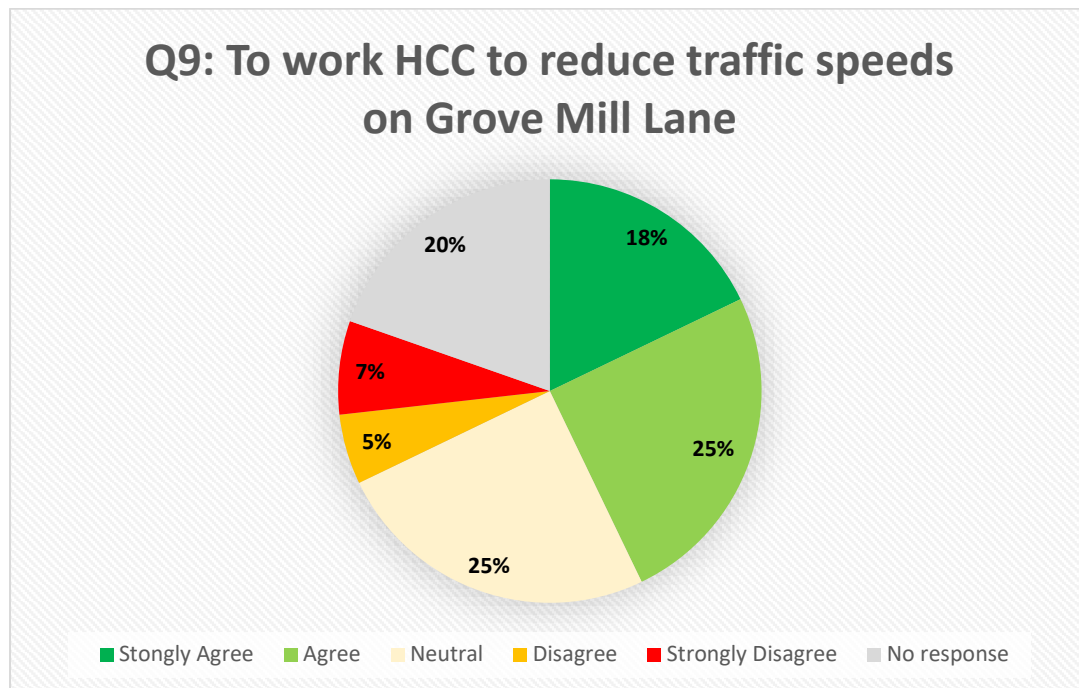
Q8 - To support a cross-council group to help deliver enhancements to St Mary's churchyard, in particular the condition and maintenance of the heritage assets.



Stongly Agree	22
Agree	15
Neutral	10
Disagree	2
Strongly Disagree	3
No response	4

Respondent ID	Status	Level of Support	Comment
63dce379df770a001866733f	confirmed	Strongly Agree	This area neds a radical rethink to make it something we are proud of
63ea6836f24c9000198b1fc0	confirmed	Neutral	Can't the church fund this?
6334227dd2e3600013473bd3	confirmed	Neutral	Surely maintenance of the churchyard is the responsibility of the church?
63f0dd6d8c3a56001915ce26	confirmed	Strongly Agree	An absolute total ban on street drinking and drug dealers
640354582e82f90019c28493	confirmed	Disagree	Why? It's a nice space as it is.
6412e032e432360019e7c681	confirmed	Neutral	Why have you posted photos of areas/buildings not on the list? Shouldn't you already be maintaining the areas on the list? You should already be issuing information about what you are doing with money appropriated by the council which should include maintaining conservation areas.

Q9 - To work with the County Council to assess whether there is a way to reduce traffic speeds on Grove Mill Lane, and then report back to residents.

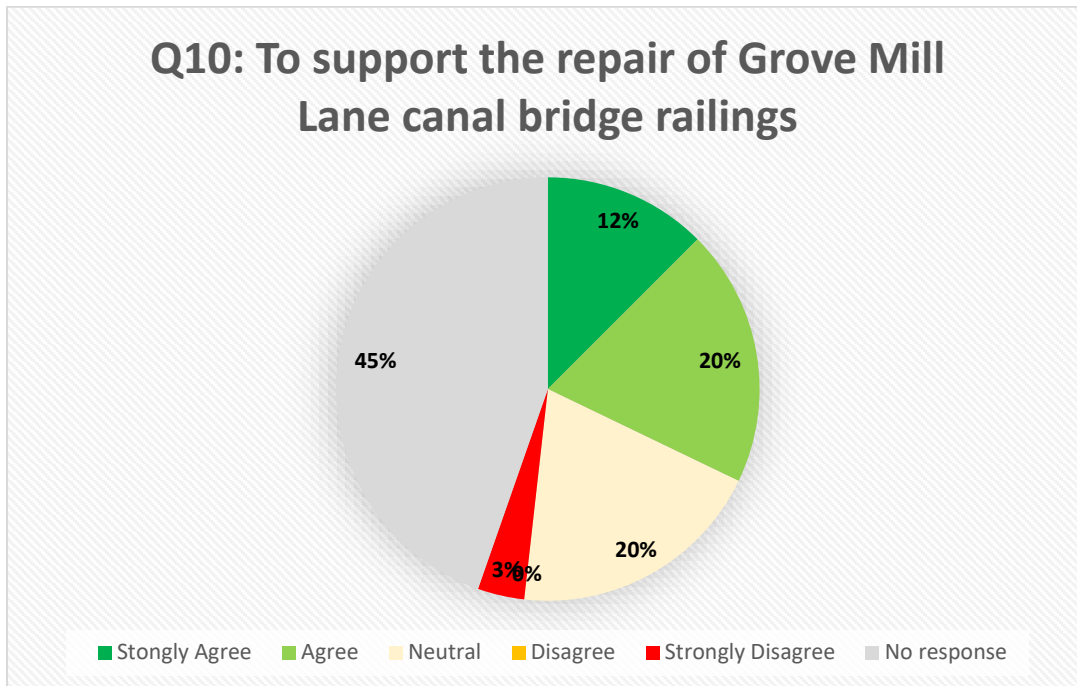


Stongly Agree	10
Agree	14
Neutral	14
Disagree	3
Strongly Disagree	4
No response	11

Respondent ID	Status	Level of Support	Comment
63dd419ca0a2f40019dac40a	confirmed	Agree	This should also be considered for Villiers Road, Oxhey, but regarding amount of traffic rather than speed.
63ea6836f24c9000198b1fc0	confirmed	Agree	Don't go about reducing speeds by making it narrower with dangerous branches sticking out, though. Width restrictions would be useful as unsuitable vehicles use the route especially when the motorway is blocked.
63eb36c0f24c9000198b257d	pending		Once again I bet a council officer lives there
6400db2639131c0018117ee	confirmed	Strongly Disagree	Speeding at Grove Mill is a physical impossibility so the task is pointless
640354582e82f90019c28493	confirmed	Disagree	This is hardly the worst traffic problem in Watford

6404f4e82e82f90019c2949c	confirmed	Strongly Agree	If footpaths could be added /widened that would aken it safer for pedestrians (and cyclists)
6412e032e432360019e7c68 1	confirmed	Disagree	Why have you posted photos of areas/buildings not on the list? Shouldn't you already be maintaining the areas on the list? You should already be issuing information about what you are doing with money appropriated by the council which should include maintaining conservation areas.
63db86ac689cef0019ac249e	confirmed	Strongly Disagree	Ideal solution is to introduce "exclusive cycling lanes", rather than reducing the speed to encourage the residents to opt in for alternative commute options. If building additional flats are avoided, the traffic and noise pollution may also be contained. There are multiple roads that are oversaturated, the council should focus on the Bushey station area to tackle the congestion instead.

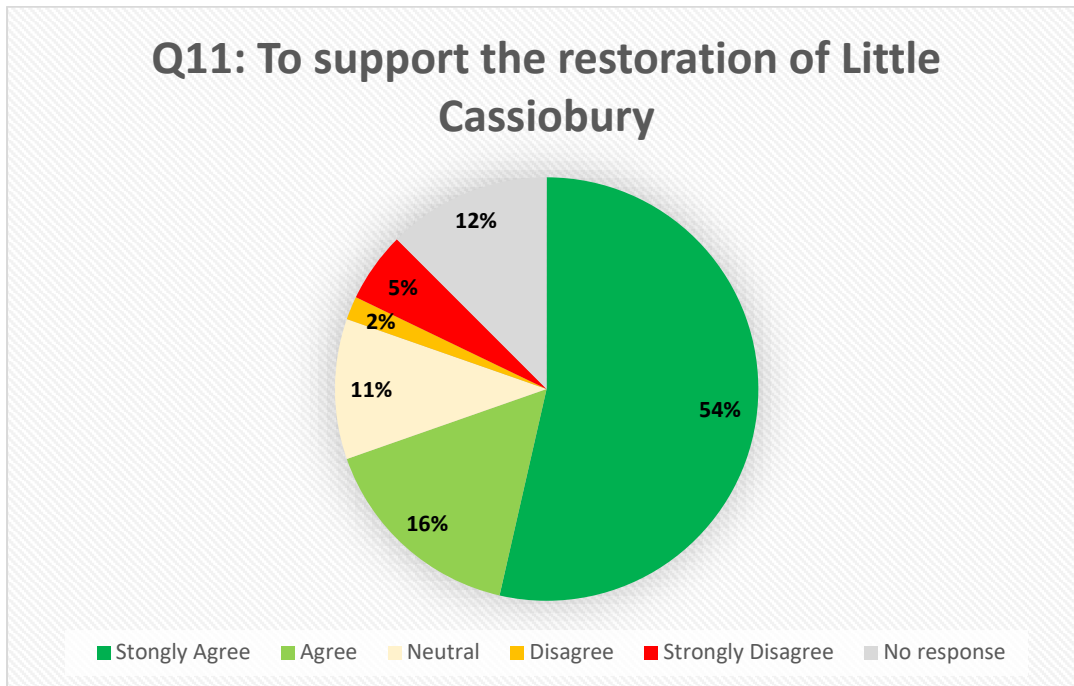
Q10 - To support the Canal & River Trust and Hertfordshire County Council in the repair of the canal bridge railings at Grove Mill Lane.



Stongly Agree	7
Agree	11
Neutral	11
Disagree	0
Strongly Disagree	2
No response	25

Respondent ID	Status	Level of Support	Comment
63f0dd6d8c3a56001915ce26	confirmed	Agree	Why just one set of railings we have miles of rivers and canals and off road sustrans pathway all need better maintenance
640354582e82f90019c28493	confirmed	Neutral	If they need fixing, fix them
6412e032e432360019e7c68 1	confirmed	Strongly Agree	Why have you posted photos of areas/buildings not on the list? Shouldn't you already be maintaining the areas on the list? You should already be issuing information about what you are doing with money appropriated by the council which should include maintaining conservation areas.

Q11 - To support Hertfordshire County Council and other partners in finding a way to restore Little Cassiobury, which is now at the highest risk level on the Historic England register.

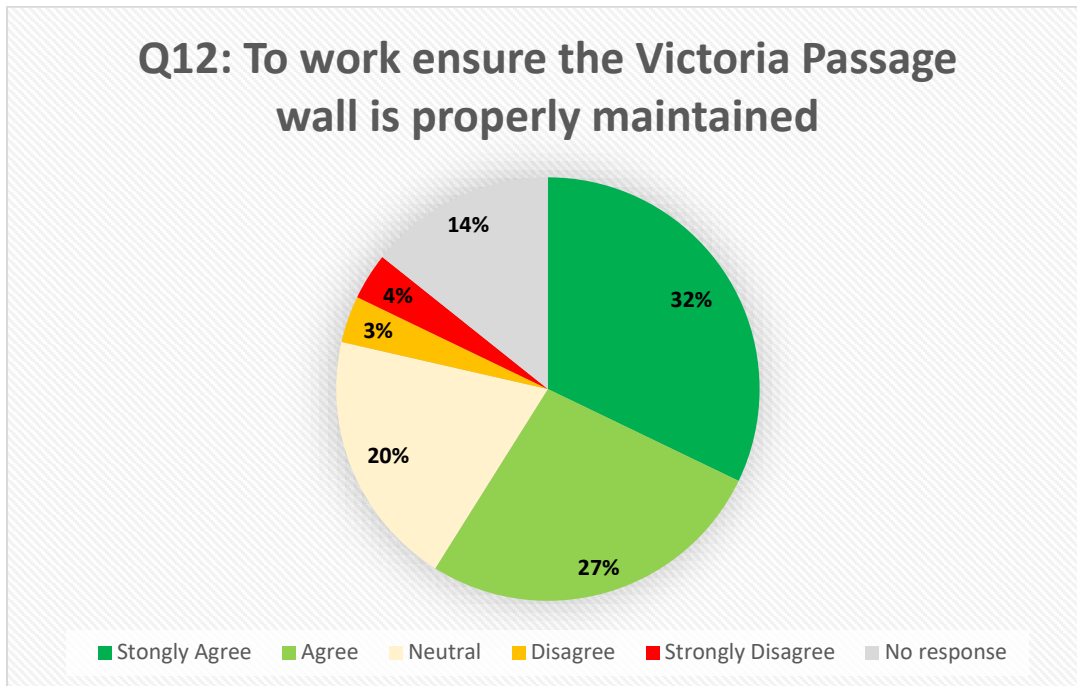


Stongly Agree	30
Agree	9
Neutral	6
Disagree	1
Strongly Disagree	3
No response	7

Respondent ID	Status	Level of Support	Comment
63dce379df770a001866733f	confirmed	Strongly Agree	Don't lose it through a sale that will not look after it
640094b8a2286500196b4754	confirmed	Strongly Agree	We love our historic buildings, where have they all gone?
6400db2639131c0018117ee	confirmed	Strongly Disagree	The building is dead, pointless and with the gates gone what's the point being next to a modern college and new school
640354582e82f90019c28493	confirmed	Neutral	Where is it and who benefits? Pretty sure 99% of Watford residents have no idea and could think of something better to spend the money on.

63ea5fddc0594600199dbb4 d	confirmed		<p>Hopefully the damage that years of neglect has caused can be reversed. Little Cassiobury deserves to be treated with care and respect, not allowed to be 'restored' or 'developed' unsympathetically.</p> <p>I look forward to this hidden architectural jewel being given the loving care and respect it deserves. It would make a wonderful centre for creative artists to find small spaces to work either individually or in larger groups.</p> <p>There is so much potential for this beautiful building, I hope someone has the vision to breathe new life back into it.</p>
6412e032e432360019e7c68 1	confirmed	Strongly Agree	<p>Why have you posted photos of areas/buildings not on the list? Shouldn't you already be maintaining the areas on the list?</p> <p>You should already be issuing information about what you are doing with money appropriated by the council which should include maintaining conservation areas.</p>

Q12 - To work with the Environment Team to ensure that the boundary wall of the cemetery and Victoria Passage is properly maintained.

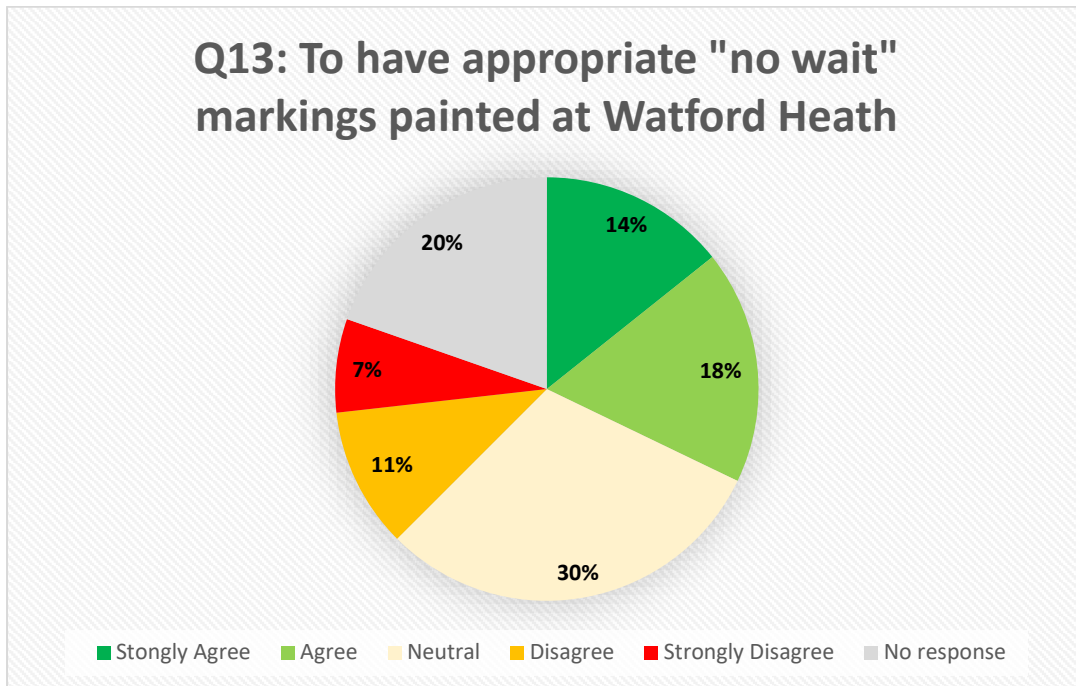


Stongly Agree	18
Agree	15
Neutral	11
Disagree	2
Strongly Disagree	2
No response	8

Respondent ID	Status	Level of Support	Comment
63e92415ddf95b0018f8aad8	confirmed	Strongly Agree	While I support this, it isn't clear what difference being in a conservation area makes to prevent the character of local properties being changed
63ea6836f24c9000198b1fc0	confirmed	Agree	Is there a team that deals with walls? Many private walls are in a poor state or repair and could be dangerous.
6400db2639131c0018117eee	confirmed	Disagree	What's the point?
640354582e82f90019c28493	confirmed		If it's unsafe, fix it. Do you really need a study to decide?

6412e032e432360019e7c681	confirmed	Strongly Agree	Why have you posted photos of areas/buildings not on the list? Shouldn't you already be maintaining the areas on the list? You should already be issuing information about what you are doing with money appropriated by the council which should include maintaining conservation areas.
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Q13 - To work with Hertfordshire County Council to have conservation area specified "no wait" markings installed around the green at Watford Heath.



Stongly Agree	8
Agree	10
Neutral	17
Disagree	6
Strongly Disagree	4
No response	11

Respondent ID	Status	Level of Support	Comments
63ea6836f24c9000198b1fc0	confirmed	Strongly Disagree	Wouldn't this close the pubs and mean only very local people enjoying the area?
63eb36c0f24c9000198b257d	pending	Disagree	What is the point they will still park like in Villiers Rd double yellow still park there
640354582e82f90019c28493	confirmed	Neutral	Why? Who benefits and what's the problem if nothing is done?
6412e032e432360019e7c68 1	confirmed	Neutral	Why have you posted photos of areas/buildings not on the list? Shouldn't you already be maintaining the areas on the list? You should already be issuing information about what you are doing with money appropriated by the council which should include maintaining conservation areas.

Q14 - Is there anything else you'd like to tell us?

Respondent ID	Status	Comment
63dbdc31135c4d00198875de	confirmed	<p>The Estcourt Conservation area pavements and roads are massively outdated and under constant repair. Residents who live here call this the patchwork road and pavements. The water works pipes are outdated, as is the life of the roads and pavements. I would like to see a review of the overall 'look' of the state of the roads and pavements on Estcourt Road (as a good example), and the street lighting, which is of poor quality, dated and in great need of updating. Would the Victorian conservation area not look much improved if the roads had Victorian style lighting to match the period of these houses.</p>
63dce0a05a4c8900190454d8	confirmed	<p>The current guidance on dormer loft conversions seems inappropriate for the Queens Road area. To allow homeowners in this area to convert loft spaces into additional bedrooms would provide a much needed boost to the local economy and would help solve the problem of insufficient housing space near the Watford junction station. Queens Road is a run down street and its surprising that its in a conservation area, however allowing homeowners to invest in their properties in this way would result in a tidier area. The size of the dormer should not be taken into consideration given that such conversions have existed longer than many of the properties. Instead a stipulation over the materials used should be put in place in order to make the conversion look in keeping with the rest of the house. I am generally surprised that the Queens Road area is a conservation area as it is very run down, therefore we should not be putting laws in place which prevent investment that would help improve this. Queens Road has significant potential to uplift Watford given its close proximity to the station and town, however its currently in a very sorry state and we need to do something about this.</p>
63dce379df770a001866733f	confirmed	<p>Yes. You go on about heritage but the heritage of Nascot has been completely blown apart by the high rise buildings that you sanctioned and now grossly overlook the area. Don't blame the Tories,. In all the years you have been in control you have failed to lay down any sort of town plan that limits the height of buildings. You need to get this into your planning.</p>

63de540bd8308e0019d3dda1	pending	The area surrounding Bedford Street is currently looking in very poor condition, the boundary between the rail yard and Bedford Street has looked tatty for years but now more so since the bushes and greenery were removed when the flats were built. Compared to Church Road and other surrounding roads it is noticeably more scruffy and less green.
63e94a67ddf95b0018f8abfd	confirmed	I think the rules on restrictions on development at the back of houses, which cannot be seen from the street, should be relaxed. Such as restrictions on loft conversions only being allowed to half the width of the house. These rules don't enhance the conservation area but are very costly for residents.
63ea6836f24c9000198b1fc0	confirmed	When placing murals, please consider heritage and suitable themes. What has Elton John got to do with the library? A literary theme or Watford heritage connected with the Town Hall area would have been more fitting. What about a heritage board at the Underground station explaining why it is in a daft place? Do not damage businesses by removing parking facilities just to please a small group of residents.
63eb36c0f24c9000198b257d	pending	Help local businesses
6334227dd2e3600013473bd3	confirmed	Yes. We need an easy way of notifying the Conservation Officer of concerns regarding works and changes within the conservation areas. This should preferably be a monitored email address which must be acknowledged within two working days. Cover needs to be in place when the Conservation Officer is away, Within Nascot there have been several instances of changes/demolition of locally 'listed' historic walls; there should be a simple way to notify you of such concerns.
633602c59ecc6f0013d585c7	confirmed	Perhaps the conservation areas with commercial buildings could benefit from a facade grant to help them have a more historic looking/appropriate window/doors/signage. Or offer to certain streets outside of conservation areas too?

632c944b1ec5d400133d1070	confirmed	I support all measures which will ensure the conservation of important areas and aspects of Watford's environment. Giving residents living in conservation areas a much clearer idea of what is possible or not possible is a key factor in eliminating/reducing current dissatisfaction by those residents who are not clear on this subject. It will also prevent misleading information being circulated and causing dismay/problems.
6400db2639131c0018117eee	confirmed	You've failed miserably on pretty much every aspect of Council activity.
640354582e82f90019c28493	confirmed	This whole thing seems like a waste of time. The concept of conservations area in Watford feels like it's at odds with what's actually happening in the town, ie. building flats on any available space and green space with no care as whether the residents want them and waving away any protests. This conservation project is too little, too late and if there is any actual benefit at all, benefits too few people.
6405a59838a14500198e65dd	confirmed	the most vital points for me as a resident is the planning application process, what requires planning and what is likely to be accepted/rejected
640900f85e68ad001904e63d	pending	The museum should be left where it is and invested in
640d04e3f00e61001a5e1458	confirmed	Have you considered the history of the reeds Estate on Reeds cressent?
6339f5bcd0901b0013582485	confirmed	Please remove the Oxhey Village Conservation area. When it started we were told it would stop inappropriate development, but it has not stopped back garden developments totally change the area. Instead it interferes with the colours of front doors, this is not what we were promised and less intervention is needed
6412e032e432360019e7c681	confirmed	Why have you posted photos of areas/buildings not on the list? Shouldn't you already be maintaining the areas on the list? You should already be issuing information about what you are doing with money appropriated by the council which should include maintaining conservation areas.

Appendix 3

Specific comments and points made at Public Meetings

Nascot and Civic Core Conservation Areas

The meeting for the Nascot and Civic Core conservation areas took place from 19:00 at the Town Hall Annex on 21 February 2023. 12 members of the public attended, along with one ward councillor.

The following comments/issues were raised:

- Whether the increasing levels of high density and tall development are rendering the conservation areas “obsolete”.
- Whether searches or land charge documents include links to websites that provide more information on conservation areas and Art 4 Directions. This is an option that we will investigate. A related comment asked whether it would be possible to have signage stating that ‘you are in a conservation area’. This is not an action proposed for the next three year period, but requires further consideration.
- Why owners of locally listed buildings are expected to use original materials when replacing elements of their buildings and doing repairs work.
- Why fees have to be paid for planning applications for properties subject to Article 4 Directions.
- There was a more general discussion regarding solar panels and the problems that can be faced when trying to install heat pumps.
- That it is disgraceful that Little Cassiobury has been allowed to deteriorate to the state it is now in. The resident also questioned what powers the Council have to make the owners repair the property.
- The Little Cassiobury Community Interest Company provided an update regarding their claim that HCC had agreed to let them have the building for a nominal sum once they could put a business plan and project together to raise the money for the restoration; they have an outstanding complaint with the Ombudsman regarding this.

Grove Mill Lane and Macdonell Gardens

The meeting for the Grove Mill Lane and Macdonell Gardens conservation areas took place from 19:00 at Cheslyn House on 23 February 2023. 4 members of the public attended, along with one ward councillor.

The following comments/issues were raised:

- That improving the accessibility of information on the Council website is very welcome.
- A discussion on how the town has developed since the 1840s.
- A general discussion around energy efficiency and how improving this aspect of traditionally built dwellings can be much more complex than it might seem.
- A reduction in the speed limit on Grove Mill Lane is welcomed; the ward councillor stated that they are already working with HCC on this issue and are happy to work with the Conservation Team collaboratively to see what can be achieved.

- The requirement for the repair of the railings on the canal bridge was also raised. Apparently many requests have previously been made to the Canal and River Trust in an attempt to have the railings repaired; it is hoped that we can make a more progress on this by working alongside HCC on this as they have an interest in the highway over the bridge.
- Some comments were made that the actions for Grove Mill Lane were little more than working with partners. It was pointed out that as we are not owners or the responsible party for either issue, we are unable to sort the issues directly.

Estcourt, St Mary's & High Street/King Street

The meeting for the Estcourt, St Mary's and High Street/King Street conservation areas took place from 19:00 at The Chamber Hub (Urban Room) on 28 February 2023. It was preceded by a drop-in session from 17:00-19:00. Two groups attended the drop-in session, along with 4 members of the public at the evening meeting.

The following comments/issues were raised at the drop-in session:

- Residents of Estcourt conservation area welcomed the idea of guidance on small-scale changes and stated that guidance on energy efficiency is particularly needed.
- They would also like to see the Queens Road local shopping area improved and more made of it in terms of the local community. Neighbourhood grant was discussed as one possibility.
- It was suggested that historic maps should be made easily accessible on the Council's website.
- A local business owner discussed the project to improve the churchyard area surrounding St Mary's. He recommended involving local stakeholders and having a consultation on any ideas proposed.
- The same business owner also asked about Little Cassiobury. He felt that the building could be used as managed office space, with the potential of an area provided for the Little Cassiobury Community Interest Company. The individual was concerned about extent of the property actually included in the sale.

The following comments/issues were raised at the evening meeting:

- That copies of Article 4 Directions need to be provided and sent with explanations when search documentation is provided. If that was not an option, links to clearly explained information could be provided as an alternative.
- Questions were raised on fence restrictions in rear gardens, solar panel installation and energy efficiency improvements.
- There was a feeling that compliance with the requirements would be higher if people better understood what they can and cannot do.
- The possibility of installing roundels and signposting to inform residents that they are in a conservation area was again raised.
- The attendees were generally supportive and interested in finding out more; they support the actions, which will aid this.

Oxhey & Watford Heath

The meeting for the Oxhey and Watford Heath conservation areas took place from 19:00 at Bushey and Oxhey Methodist Church on 6 March 2023. 11 members of the public attended, along with one ward councillor.

The following comments/issues were raised:

- Concern was raised that residents in older properties have many restrictions but many have the perception that developers can come in and build what they like. The principle of building on former garden sites was strongly disapproved of.
- A question was raised about what the community as a whole get out of being in a conservation area and also whether any new conservation areas were likely to be designated.
- The question of why residents have to pay for pre-application advice; they feel that it is difficult to find simple guidance or speak to an officer about what can and cannot be done.
- A question was raised about how local noticeboards could be used regarding heritage matters.
- The possibility was raised of having roundels of signposting installed so residents know they are in a conservation area.
- A comment was made by a resident that did not understand why changes of paint colour have been so contentious with the council.
- Information on how to restore or reinstate character and whether this would be supported.
- Advice was sought on where to find good trades people who know how to deal with traditional buildings.
- How long before any guidance would be produced and whether there would be interim advice and signposting to information.
- Attendees were generally supportive and interested in finding out more; they supported the actions that will aid this.

The Square

The meeting for The Square conservation area took place from 19:00 at Cornerstone Church on 8 March 2023. 7 (signed in) members of the public attended, along with three ward councillors.

The following comments/issues were raised:

- The potential use of Little Cassiobury for community usage was definitely preferred over other options.
- An interesting point was raised about using local competitions as a way of encouraging residents to beautify spaces in front of their homes with plants and flowers. The same individual also suggested the provision of wild flower seed in schools as a way of helping support this and involve local children. Although not considered as an action at this stage, it is an interesting idea and would provide an enhancement that could be supported.

Conservation Areas Draft Management Plan



Action Plan 2023-26

For Adoption
July 2023



**WATFORD
BOROUGH
COUNCIL**

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SECTION 1

Introduction

- 1.1 The legal definition of a conservation area comes from the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. They are:
“areas of special architectural or historic interest the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance.”
- 1.2 Conservation areas are not designated to stop any development or change, but to help minimise any negative effects on what makes the area special and worthy of protection in the first place.
- 1.3 Section 71 of the 1990 Act places a duty on local planning authorities to draw up and publish proposals for the preservation and enhancement of conservation areas in their districts. The aim of this draft management plan is to set out how Watford Borough Council will undertake this.
- 1.4 The Management Plan provides a programme of actions for the period 2023-2026 and will be reviewed in line with the Council’s overall delivery plan review timetable. The actions proposed are derived from the engagement process and have been prioritised based on the frequency of the issue being raised and the ability in terms of resources to deliver that action.
- 1.5 Within the Borough of Watford there are ten areas which have been designated as conservation areas, as they are considered to have a special architectural or historic interest, the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance:

Conservation Area	Designated	Additional Information
Grove Mill Lane	1973	Partly within Three Rivers District.
St Mary’s	1975	
Watford Heath	2001	Extended in 2008.
Civic Core	2001	
Nascot	2001	Extended in 2001.
Estcourt	2001	Extended in 2010.
The Square	2001	
High Street / King Street	2006	
Macdonnell Gardens	2011	
Oxhey	2013	

Background, Scope and Structure

- 1.6 The Council considers that historic areas make a significant contribution towards the urban fabric of the Borough. This is reflected in themes 3 and 4 of the 2022-2026 Council Plan, where it is recognised that heritage has a key part to play in what makes Watford a special place. The delivery of conservation area management plans is also an action within the 2022-2024 delivery plan. These historic areas are important to the town’s cultural inheritance, economic well-being and quality of life. However, it is important to recognise that these areas have always been subject to change and that is part of what makes them special. Therefore, the key objective of the Management Plan is to ensure that change is managed in a way that maintains and enhances the special qualities of the conservation areas. The document sets

out actions that will result in a better understanding of how changes to existing properties can be managed in a way that will achieve this.

- 1.7 This document sits alongside the existing character appraisals for the ten conservation areas in Watford. The character appraisal documents provide detailed analysis of what is positive and negative in each area, identify opportunities for beneficial change, or the need for additional protection.
- 1.8 This management plan takes forward the actions developed following a combination of public outreach and the assessment of Council records, such as the planning applications submitted within Watford's conservation areas. The document is structured to provide coverage of issues that are evident across the ten conservation areas in the Borough, before providing dedicated coverage of area specific issues and setting out a monitoring regime.

Planning Policy Background

National Policy

- 1.9 The 2021 National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) details the importance of identifying and managing heritage assets. It details that local planning authorities should set out a strategy for the conservation and enjoyment of the historic environment, including heritage assets most at risk through neglect, decay or other threats. In developing this strategy, local planning authorities should take into account:

- The desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets;
- The wider social, cultural, economic and environmental benefits that conservation of the historic environment can bring;
- The desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness; and
- Opportunities to draw on the contribution made by the historic environment to the character of a place.

- 1.10 Section 71 of the Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 details that:

- It shall be the duty of a local planning authority from time to time to formulate and publish proposals for the preservation and enhancement of any parts of their area which are conservation areas.
- Proposals under this section shall be submitted for consideration to a public meeting in the area to which they relate.
- The local planning authority shall have regard to any views concerning the proposals expressed by persons attending the meeting.

Local Policy

- 1.11 Watford Local Plan was adopted in October 2022 and sets out the Council's local policies in relation to the Historic Environment in chapter 7. Conservation areas are one of three types of designated heritage assets (the others being statutorily listed buildings, such as St Mary's Church and registered parks, such as Cassiobury Park). The policies:

- Seek to retain the distinctive character and appearance of the conservation areas.

- Require development to be of appropriate scale and materiality.
- Seek to enhance existing features and structures that contribute to the significance of the conservation areas.

Adoption

- 1.12 This document is intended for adoption as an Action Plan for delivery between 2023 and 2026 at the Watford Borough Council cabinet meeting in June 2023.

Local Consultation

- 1.13 There is a requirement under Section 71 of the Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 for the local authority to consult the local community on any management proposals for conservation areas.
- 1.14 Two stages of public engagement were used to inform the actions proposed in this management plan. The first was an informal style of engagement that took place over the summer of 2022 (July – September). It invited residents to provide their views on what they liked and didn't like about the conservation areas in Watford. The engagement took the form of an online survey, discussions with school groups, a small exhibition with drop-in sessions and walking tour meetings with groups of residents. The comments collected during the engagement were used to develop the actions proposed. The suggestions were prioritised by the frequency with which they were made and the ability of the Council to deliver them within the life of this management plan.
- 1.15 The second phase of the engagement involved public meetings that were held within, or as close to the conservation areas as possible, so that residents could attend. Letters were sent to every property within the 10 conservation areas setting out the details of the meetings and how residents could submit comments through an online survey, by e mail or by letter. This engagement focussed on the actions proposed and asked residents for their views on these actions. The responses received to this stage have helped inform the content of the management plan.

Nationally and Locally Listed Buildings

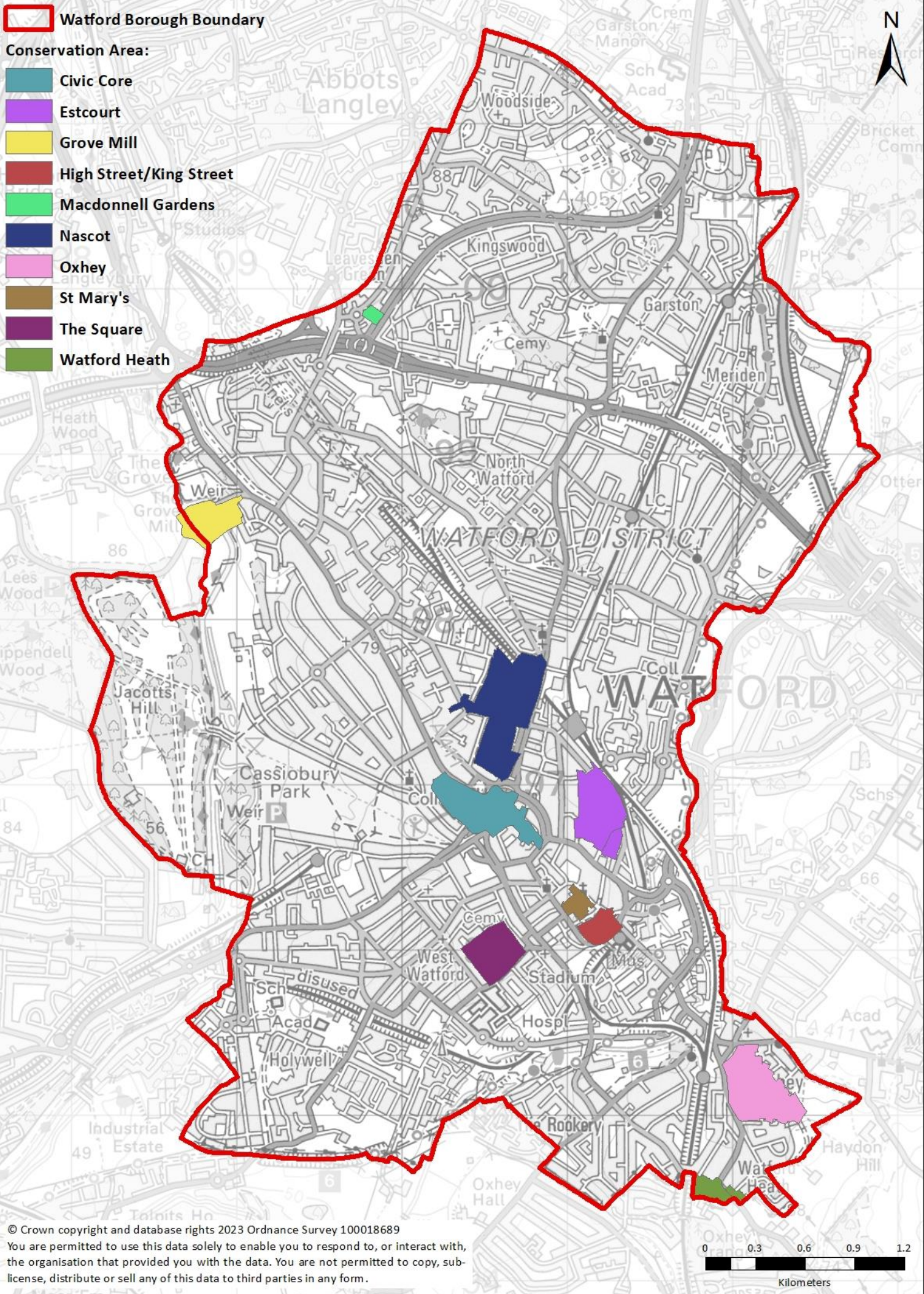
- 1.16 Additional information on all the locally and nationally listed buildings in the Borough is contained in dedicated documents. These can be downloaded from: www.watford.gov.uk/apply-planning-permission/conservation-areas-listed-buildings/3

Archaeology

- 1.17 Information on archaeology in Watford is contained within the document: Hunns (2000) 'Watford: Extensive Urban Survey Project Assessment Report' and the County Council's Historic Environment Record (HER), accessible at www.heritagegateway.org.uk. There is also some additional commentary in the various conservation area character appraisal documents.

Acknowledgments

- 1.18 The assistance provided by the staff of Watford Museum and the Council's Communications Team in the development of this project is gratefully acknowledged.



SECTION 2

Actions Applying to all Conservation Areas in Watford

- 2.1 Many suggestions were made during the informal engagement, which took place in summer 2022. These included a number of actions that could be applied to all conservation areas within the Borough. The actions included in this document were developed through the engagement process and the review of best practice guidance from bodies such as Historic England.
- 2.2 The actions can be grouped into three key themes:
- Improve access to information.
 - Provide guidance for residents and businesses in conservation areas on what is likely to be acceptable in terms of minor changes to homes and business premises.
 - Review how works to the public realm in conservation areas can be better managed to improve their appearance. This includes additional street trees.
- 2.3 The Council is committed to delivering improvements to all three of these themes using the actions described below.

Commitment – To provide better access to information relating to conservation areas on the Council’s website.

- 2.4 During both consultation phases residents stated that they found it hard to find the information they wanted to access on the Council’s website, as well as having difficulty accessing it in other ways. A number of factors have contributed to this, ranging from lack of awareness that the information exists, difficulties in locating relevant information and, in part, due to information not being available on the website. Residents wanted to be able to find more information about conservation areas, about how the planning process worked and how the Council managed planning enforcement cases.
- 2.5 Issues such as a high turnover of property owners in some conservation areas, a lack of regular reminders from the Council about where the conservation areas are and the lack of any physical identification in the conservation areas to identify them as such have contributed to this lack of knowledge and understanding about conservation areas in Watford. In addition, many residents are unclear about how the Article 4 Directions work and what they mean in practical terms.
- 2.6 Within this theme we have identified three broad actions which will contribute to improving this:

Action 1 - Improve access to information.

To provide better information on subjects such as conservation areas, Article 4 Directions, the planning process and decision making, how to contact the Council on conservation matters related to planning, how fees are set, pre-application process and how the enforcement process works in relation to heritage.

2.7 We will review how we can best provide a simple and clear service for residents and businesses in conservation areas. We will provide easy access on the website to information including:

- Conservation areas – where they are and what is important about them.
- Article 4 Directions - what they mean in non-technical language.
- The planning process in relation to decision making on planning applications.
- Ensure that information about planning fees is clearer in relation to householder development and article 4 related applications.
- How the householder pre-application advice process works.
- How the planning enforcement process works in relation to heritage matters.
- Making general information and advice accessible through our website with links to other relevant websites and downloadable PDFs.
- How to contact the council on conservation- related planning matters.

Action 2 – Use a range of platforms to promote where to find relevant information on the Council’s website.

To promote how to find information and guidance related to conservation areas on the Council’s website through social media, the “About Watford” newsletter, local notice boards and Facebook groups.

2.8 We will review how we provide information, signposting residents and businesses to the appropriate sections of the website. We will also provide links to other platforms that contain relevant information. We will ensure that information is provided regularly and in an inclusive way:

- Making better use of social media platforms.
- Placing regular features in the WBC newsletter which is delivered to every household.
- Working with local community groups to highlight the availability of information, as well as locating neighbourhood noticeboards we can also use for this reason.
- Using community social media groups to signpost to where information is available.

Action 3 – Education events

To hold education events about local heritage with schools and other community groups.

- 2.9 We will help improve awareness and understanding of local heritage matters, including conservation areas, by working with local groups. We will build on the existing events we have held and work with partners across the council and the wider community to develop and expand this programme.

Commitment – To provide better guidance for residents and businesses in conservation areas

- 2.10 During both consultation stages, the most frequently received comments related to the need for provision of clear guidance on what requires planning permission in conservation areas and what would be acceptable to the Council in terms of minor householder changes. In particular, guidance was requested in relation to Article 4 Directions and how they restrict development, as well as on improving the energy efficiency of older properties.
- 2.11 There is still general support for the use of Article 4 Directions and an understanding of why these are used in the conservation areas in Watford. However, residents found it quite challenging to understand what they should be doing when they wish to make improvements to their homes.
- 2.12 The proposed action to provide guidance on subjects such as those above was well supported in the formal engagement period. Comments received during both the formal and informal engagement periods, as well as the discussions held during the public meetings and drop in session, will inform the details of the guidance going forwards.

Action 4 - Provide planning guidance on householder development in conservation areas.

To provide guidance for residents wishing to make changes to their homes, on subjects such as what may and may not need planning permission, household maintenance, energy efficiency, renewable energy installations including solar panels and EV charging points.

- 2.13 We will provide clear and accessible guidance for householders regarding changes they may wish to make to their properties:
- Produce householder guidance on development in conservation areas relating to those permitted development rights that have been withdrawn through the use of Article 4 Directions.
 - To produce advice for all owners of older properties regarding improving the energy efficiency of their homes using appropriate methods.

Action 5 - Provide planning guidance for owners of properties with shopfronts.

To provide guidance for businesses on how to make minor changes to their properties in a way that helps enhance conservation areas.

2.14 We will review and update the existing shopfront design guide to help businesses in conservation areas to make appropriate decisions when they need to make alterations to their properties.

Commitment – To encourage conservation led enhancements to the public realm in conservation areas

2.15 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) states that local Planning Authorities should seek opportunities within conservation areas “to enhance or better reveal their significance”. Conservation areas can be experienced and enjoyed by all, not just their residents, so improvements can have a wide-reaching impact on public perception of the town.

2.16 The following sections include actions that apply to all conservation areas in the Borough, as well as several that are area specific.

Action 6 – Public realm management

To review how we manage the public spaces in conservation areas, to ensure an appropriate and consistent approach.

2.17 We will review how public spaces within conservation areas are managed to clarify who will carry out any works required and ensure that appropriate materials and methods are used.

2.18 We will engage with partners internally and externally who undertake works in conservation areas and work with them to ensure a consistent and agreed approach to the works the undertake in the town.

Action 7 – Street trees

To identify suitable sites within conservation areas for the planting of new street trees.

2.19 We will identify suitable sites within conservation areas for new trees. Trees have an array of benefits including reducing surface water flooding and “heat island” effect, increasing biodiversity and helping improve air quality.

2.20 This action will help support the Council’s objective to plant 20,000 trees over the next four years, whilst ensuring that any sites selected within conservation areas are appropriate. Historic photographs show that Watford used to have many more tree-lined streets, so this will be an opportunity to enhance conservation areas through their reintroduction. Care will be needed to ensure that appropriate species are planted, as they will need to be able to cope with the effects of climate change.

Area-Specific Actions

2.21 Many of the comments received during the public engagement related to specific conservation areas, or sites within them. This section sets out the actions that could be taken forward and includes some issues prompted by wider Council targets.

Action 8 - Enhance St Mary's churchyard.

To support the Council's project to help deliver enhancements to St Mary's churchyard, in particular the condition and maintenance of the heritage assets.

2.22 The Council delivery plan includes a commitment to improve St Mary's Churchyard. This provides an opportunity to enhance the setting of the church and surrounding buildings, creating a tranquil space in the town centre to complement this sensitive heritage asset. This project is specified in the Council's delivery plan and involves some of the most sensitive heritage assets in the town.

Action 9 – Grove Mill Lane speed limit

To seek to work with the County Council to assess whether there is a way to reduce traffic speeds on Grove Mill Lane, and then report back to residents.

2.23 Several comments were received relating to highways safety, at Grove Mill Lane. Highway safety is the responsibility of Hertfordshire County Council (HCC). We will seek to engage with colleagues at Three Rivers Council's and HCC to review options to contribute to speed reduction in this area so that the character and appearance of the conservation area is retained as well.

Action 10 – Grove Mill Lane canal bridge

To seek to engage with and support the Canal & River Trust and Hertfordshire County Council in the repair of the canal bridge railings at Grove Mill Lane.

2.24 The canal bridge at Grove Mill Lane was raised as a concern by several residents. The Canal and River Trust and Hertfordshire County Council are the two bodies responsible for the maintenance of this bridge. We will seek to engage with the Canal and Rivers Trust and Hertfordshire County Council to find a way to repair the canal bridge railings.

Action 11 – Little Cassiobury

To seek to support Hertfordshire County Council and other partners in finding a way to restore Little Cassiobury, which is now at the highest risk level on the Historic England register.

- 2.25 Little Cassiobury is one of Watford's most significant buildings; one of only a few nationally listed at Grade II* and the only major residential building left of the Cassiobury Estate that belonged to the Earls of Essex.
- 2.26 The current owners, HCC, recently put the building up for sale, but it is in need of significant restoration. We propose to continue supporting the County Council, or any future buyer and other interested parties, in seeking the repair and an appropriate future use for the building.

Action 12 – Cemetery wall at Victoria Passage

To support the council in the ongoing maintenance of the boundary wall of the cemetery and Victoria Passage.

- 2.27 Victoria Passage is a much-used route into town for many residents living in west Watford. The wall of the cemetery runs along the route and marks the boundary of The Square conservation area. The wall has degraded over the years due to buddleia plants that have taken root behind the cemetery hedges, as well as concrete repointing undertaken in the past. We will work with the Environment Team to ensure the proper maintenance and repair of the wall.

Action 13 – Double yellow lines at Watford Heath

To work with Hertfordshire County Council to have conservation area specified "no wait" markings installed around the green at Watford Heath.

- 2.28 We will work with Hertfordshire County Council to ensure that, when the double yellow lines are repainted at Watford Heath, a conservation area-specified paint and line scale are used.

SECTION 3

Monitoring

3.1 The actions outlined in this document will be monitored using the following methods:

Action	Monitoring Method
1 - Improve access to information	1: updated web pages 2: survey and reaction of those using the web pages
2 - Promote where to find information on website	1: regular social media campaigns 2: Annual features in "About Watford" 3: review of local notice boards and how they can be used
3 - Education events	Annual review of events we can arrange
4 - Provide planning guidance for residents	Publication of guidance documents
5 - Provide planning guidance for businesses	Publication of updated Shopfront Design Guide
6 - Public realm management	1: Establishing a contact group to progress with this 2: Agreement regarding approach to design and materials
7 - Street trees	Increase in number of new street trees planted in conservation areas
8 - Enhance St Mary's churchyard	Check with Project group
9 - Grove Mill Lane speed limit	Development of options for review
10 - Grove Mill Lane canal bridge	1: Contact relevant groups 2 Seek agreement on way forwards
11 - Little Cassiobury	1 Seek engagement with new owners
12 - Cemetery wall at Victoria Passage	1 removal of damaging vegetation 2 Appropriate repointing and repair
13 - Double yellow lines at Watford Heath	Seek an agreement with HCC on approach to repainting the lines

Other monitoring options we can use are:

- Regular review and updating of documents such as Conservation Area Appraisals – ideally we would do 5 year reviews
- Photographic Record – this was last done in 2013 when the Article 4 Directions were made
- Heritage at Risk – the number of buildings currently on the local and national at risk register

Contacts and further information

Development Management and conservation – contacts to be added
Three Rivers DC
Hertfordshire
Historic England

Bibliography

- HE Guidance

Useful Websites

- Historic England
- Ancient Monuments society
- Georgian Group
- Society for Protection of Ancient Buildings
- Twentieth Century Society
- Victorian Society
- SAVE Britain's Heritage
- Council for British Archaeology
- Heritage Alliance

Glossary

Appendices

National Policy – link to NPPF

Local Plan Policies

Agenda Item 8

Part A

Report to: Cabinet

Date of meeting: 5 June 2023

Report author: Head of Finance

Title: Watford Commercial Services Business Plan update

1.0 Summary

1.1 This report updates the Members with the Watford Commercial Services (WCS) five year Business Plan 2023/24 to 2027/28. This report is authored by the Executive Director of Place in his capacity as Chair of the WCS Board and on behalf of the other board members.

2.0 Risks

2.1

Nature of risk	Consequence	Suggested Control Measures	Response (treat, tolerate, terminate or transfer)	Risk Rating (combination of likelihood and severity)
That Cabinet does not approve the WCS annual Business Plan	Will cause delay to the delivery of programme and the councils housing objectives	Cabinet to approve the annual Business Plan	Treat	1x4=4
Investment with a counterparty that subsequently defaults	Recovery of principal will take longer	Invest in accordance with the Council's Treasury Management Policy	Treat	2x4=8
That the estimates used in the Hart Homes Business Plan will not be sufficiently accurate.	Budget not correct	Mitigate through regular budget monitoring and sensitivity/scenario planning	Treat	2x4=8

Delay of programme delivery	Delay to housing targets and potential budget overspends	Mitigate through regular progress monitoring	Treat	3x2=6
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3.0 Recommendations

- 3.1 Approve the Watford Commercial Services Business Plan for 2023/24 to 2027/28 attached as appendix 1;
- 3.2 Note that the business plan reflects an indicative timeline for the progression of development schemes within the Hart Homes Development LLP. The WCS Board note that due to market conditions schemes are likely to slip from projected timelines, with the implication that investment and returns will happen later than those projected.

Further information:

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Report approved by:

Tom Dobrashian, Executive Director of Place

4.0 Detailed proposal

- 4.1 Whilst the full Business Plan is appended as a part B report due to the commercial sensitivity of potential schemes a brief summary of the plan is set out below:
- 4.2 WCS has been established by Watford Borough Council (WBC), for the purpose of facilitating the joint venture arrangement with Watford Community Housing Trust to form Hart Homes (Watford) Development LLP (HHWDLIP) and to also enable the Council to trade and act for commercial purposes beyond the joint venture.
- 4.3 The objectives of the LLP are: -
- To increase the supply of housing for sale and rent
 - To generate additional income streams to enhance the core objectives of WBC and the Trust
- 4.4 This will be achieved through maximising the potential of existing assets within Watford and actively seeking opportunities inside and outside the Borough, although the latter is constrained by government guidance.

4.5 Additional commercial purposes beyond the joint venture are yet to be developed in detail and as such this business plan will focus on the activities of the LLP. Further business plans will be prepared for approval as additional commercial activities are developed.

Business Model

4.6 WBC and the Trust have agreed that the LLP will be a Limited Liability Partnership with equal investment by the members to facilitate projects and equal subsequent profit distribution.

4.7 To maximise the return generated by the initiative, a structure has been devised which will ensure

- that the regulatory requirements of the members are met
- the most efficient use of assets and capital to generate returns
- enable the venture to develop housing for sale
- act as developer for Hart Homes (Watford) Ltd for housing for rent

4.8 The LLP will undertake development of property for sale and will be instructed by WBC and the Trust, through their subsidiaries WCS and Clarendon Living, to deliver any schemes. It will also act as developer for the Ltd Company in respect of properties to be retained for rental.

Aims and Objectives

4.9 WBC and the Trust have agreed that the joint-venture will seek to increase the supply of affordable housing, primarily in Watford Borough and undertake development opportunities which will generate profit for the benefit of the members' organisations

4.10 It is an aspiration that the LLP's activities should increase the supply of affordable housing through the sites which it develops and, dependent upon the individual circumstances, may provide a greater proportion than would be required through any planning obligations. It is noted that viability issues are impacting the level of affordable housing in many schemes in Watford, with the rise of construction costs, and cost of living impacting values. Affordable housing which has an element of rented tenure will be developed on behalf of Hart Homes Watford Limited, which will own and manage such properties.

4.11 Affordable housing in this case may mean low-cost home ownership products, or other variants which may become appropriate through changes in subsidy arrangements, or enactments of new legislation.

- 4.12 The members are also cognisant of the national shortfall in housing production as a whole and sees its production of market sale homes as a significant contribution to ameliorating this aim.
- 4.13 Both WBC and the Trust has a significant stake in developing and improving the Borough of Watford, however the LLP activity is not constrained by its boundaries. The LLP will consider projects which lie within one-hour's travel from the registered office, which will broaden the opportunity-base, whilst not overstretching management capability.
- 4.14 Similarly, projects containing an element of non-residential accommodation would be considered if appropriate commercial returns are achieved.

5.0 **Implications**

5.1 **Financial**

- 5.1.1 The Shared Director of Finance comments that the budget to enable Hart Homes Development LLP to progress further development opportunities is included within the agreed capital programme budget which was approved by the Council in January 2023. However, these values are estimated as the exact value and timing of the transfer of land into the Joint Venture is uncertain. Updates will be provided to the Shareholder Board and through the Financial Monitoring Report to Finance Scrutiny Committee and Cabinet.
- 5.1.2 The business plan includes an indicative requirement for a development loan. This will be added to the Council's capital programme subject to and upon agreement of a loan facility between the Council and the Hart Homes Development LLP.
- 5.1.3 The Council holds the Riverwell reserve to manage the timing impact of delays in the receipt of expected returns from the Joint Venture which will arise if the progress of development schemes is delayed as a result of market conditions.
- 5.1.4 It is anticipated that a dividend will be received by WCS Ltd in the first quarter of 2023/24 from HHWLLP. Following this, the board of WCS will meet to agree the onward distribution of the dividend through a dividend to the shareholder or Gift Aid donation. In making the decision, the company's tax position will be considered.

5.2 **Legal Issues (Monitoring Officer)**

- 5.2.1 The Group Head of Democracy and Governance comments that the Business Plan must be approved by Cabinet on behalf of the council as sole shareholder. Currently the main business of the Company is to act as a 50% partner in a joint venture with Clarendon Living Limited (the commercial arm of Watford Community Housing) to develop housing.

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

5.3.1 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 There are no implications.

5.5 **Accommodation**

5.5.1 There are no implications.

5.6 **Community Safety/Crime and Disorder**

5.6.1 There are no implications.

5.7 **Sustainability**

5.7.1 Hart Homes is bound by planning and building regulation requirements on sustainability. Sustainability measures in current developments include:

- modern energy efficiency methods and all electric.
- electric vehicle charging points
- relocation of protected species prior to development
- maintenance of existing cycle during developments and improvements within the completed scheme.

Appendices

- Part B Appendix 1 WCS Business Plan 2023/24 to 2027/28

Background papers

No papers were used in the preparation of this report.