

## PART A

**Report to:** Cabinet  
**Date of meeting:** 16 January 2017  
**Report of:** Planning Policy Section Head  
**Title:** Watford's Monitoring Report 2016

### 1.0 Summary

- 1.1 Authorities' Monitoring Reports ('AMRs') are required to outline the progress made on the local plan timetable and assess the effectiveness of planning policies against various targets and indicators to see whether the local plan objectives are being achieved. As part of this work mandatory information is required to be included within AMRs in accordance with current planning regulations.
- 1.2 AMRs are required to be prepared and published at least once a year. Watford's Monitoring Report 2016 (Appendix 1) covers the period 1 April 2015 to 31 March 2016. Additional information that has subsequently become known with regard to more recent developments is supplied within the commentary in the AMR where it is practical to do so, in order to provide as up to date a picture as possible.
- 1.3 The Executive Summary for the AMR 2016 supplies key information on the delivery of the Local Plan Part 2 and impacts being made on the Core Strategy key objectives; it forms Appendix 2 to this Cabinet Report; it is also available to download separately from the AMR 2016 on our website [www.watford.gov.uk](http://www.watford.gov.uk)
- 1.4 Members' attention is drawn to Appendix 3, which is a quick reference table providing a range of results on target led indicators and trends from the AMR 2016.

### 2.0 Recommendations

- 2.1 It is recommended that Cabinet notes the information provided by the AMR 2016.

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**Report approved by:** Ian Dunsford, Planning Policy Section Head

### 3.0 **Background**

- 3.1 Authorities' Monitoring Reports (AMRs) have an important purpose in the ongoing management of planning policy by identifying changing circumstances and providing the context against which to consider the need for any review of the planning policies in place at the time.
- 3.2 Each local authority is required to prepare and publish their AMR at least once a year. Watford's Monitoring Report has been delivered annually since the requirement for publication was originally enforced in 2005 and this latest Monitoring Report 2016 covers the period 1 April 2015 to 31 March 2016.
- 3.3 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) was published on 27 March 2012 and came into force with immediate effect, superseding previous planning guidance, and on the 6 April 2012 'The Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012' were published, including Part 8, Section 34 which deals with the mandatory requirements of Authorities' Monitoring Reports in full. For instance, this also includes that local planning authorities should report information on net additional dwellings and net additional affordable dwellings.
- 3.4 Watford's Monitoring Report 2016 focuses on a set of indicators and monitoring mechanisms that were developed as the Local Plan Part 1 progressed, and included as the 'Monitoring Framework' within the Core Strategy. The indicators within the Monitoring Framework are currently under review as the Local Plan Part 2 policies are progressed; two new indicators are provided this year in preparation for monitoring policies contained in the proposed Local Plan Part 2; indicator S6 'Noise Complaints' and indicator G6 'River Quality'; additional indicators will added to the Monitoring Framework in this respect in the future.
- 3.5 There is no requirement for formal public consultation; the AMR 2016 has previously undergone internal consultation within the council and with Hertfordshire County Council; it also features in the Members' Bulletin for January 2017.
- 3.6 Some extracts follow from the **Executive Summary for the AMR 2016:**
- 3.7 **Planning Policy Delivery**

**A new timetable for preparing the Local Plan Part 2 was agreed by the council on 16 March 2016** and came into effect on 1 April 2016. This timetable covers the period

from 2016 to 2019 and during this period, we intend to progress the Local Plan Part 2 to adoption.

- 3.7.1 Publication consultation of **Local Plan Part 2 Site Allocations and Development Management policies** ran from midday on 18 August 2016 for a period of just over six weeks until midday on 3 October 2016, together with consultation on a draft Watford Junction Development Brief and a Masterplanning Study for Croxley View/Ascot Road, Watford. It is intended that feedback on the Croxley View/Ascot Road Study will inform a more detailed brief for the area and that the draft Watford Junction Development Brief will be refined in light of the public's and stakeholders' representations.
- 3.7.2 The comments received on the Local Plan are being considered and we are aiming for **submission of the Local Plan Part 2 in spring 2017**. A Local Plan review of our strategy will then be commenced to take account of the most up to date information on development needs in the area.

### 3.8 Sustainable neighbourhoods

**The net figure of 245 housing completions** for 2015-16 is more than the revised annual rate of 180 which was required last year to remain on target for 6,500 additional dwellings by 2031. Although 245 completions is slightly less than the current annual average target of 260 homes, this is compensated for by the scale of housing delivery in previous years. Watford has delivered a total of 3,860 new homes between 2006/07 and 2015/16, an average of 386 per annum. However, the housing target will be revised as part of the Local Plan review, taking into account up to date evidence.

- 3.8.1 Four developments completed under **permitted development rights** during 2015/16 which resulted in a total of 118 homes. This is the first year that we have seen a large proportion, 46.9% of the total net completions, resulting from permitted development termed as prior approvals. These prior approvals were mainly changes of use from offices. All known prior approvals for residential development not yet implemented in Watford are included in the housing trajectory and currently amount to 129 homes, 2.5% of all 5,073 housing commitments at 31 March 2016 (and 7.3% of the 1,752 units with planning permission or prior approval).
- 3.8.2 Watford is able to demonstrate a **5 year housing land supply**  $(2,360/880)*100 = 268.2\%$ . This is equivalent to **13.4 years supply**, which is well above the National Planning Policy Framework requirement of 105% and takes housing delivery in previous years into account to check we are on target to attain the minimum 6,500 additional dwellings by 2031. We also have a sufficient housing land supply to cover the annual average target of 260 homes for more than five years.  $(2360/1300)*100 =$

181.5% = 9.1 years supply.

3.8.3 There were **25 affordable dwelling completions** in 2015-16, 100% affordable rented. Whilst this does not fully meet our target mix for affordable dwellings, in terms of overall provision, the minimum policy requirement of affordable homes has been provided on all applicable sites. Between 35% and as much as 100% of the total residential units on each qualifying site has been achieved, increasing the stock of affordable homes. Since 2006/07, the start of Watford's Local Plan Part 1 – Core Strategy 2006–31, 1,176 affordable homes have been completed, an average of 118 affordable homes per annum.

### 3.9 **Enhance Watford's regional economic and transportation role**

The **new link road** from Dalton Way to Watford General Hospital opened in November 2016, currently improving access to the hospital but it will eventually serve the future development associated with the Health Campus. The new road has been named Thomas Sawyer Way in honour of Captain Tom Sawyer, who lived in the locality close to the Campus scheme and was killed in Afghanistan at the age of 26, whilst serving in the Royal Artillery.

3.9.1 Construction started in August 2016 on twelve new industrial units which will be known as Trade City Watford on the former carriage shed site at Wighenhall Road. Trade City Watford is the **first commercial zone of the Health Campus** that will start to deliver jobs and employment premises to attract new businesses to Watford. It is due to be completed in autumn 2017 and will be fully landscaped with a dedicated wildlife area to one side, adjacent to the River Colne. The units are expected to provide an additional 180 jobs for the town and much needed high quality employment space.

3.9.2 Watford's Core Strategy seeks a minimum of 7,000 additional jobs in the district between 2006 and 2031. The latest published data from the EEFM, (dated 11 August 2016) with a 2016 baseline, suggests job growth in Watford of 10,100 from 2006 to 2016 and implies **total job growth of 17,100 for the period 2006 to 2031**. It is considered that the redevelopment of Charter Place is generating 500 construction jobs leading to 1,125 new jobs in retail, catering and leisure and that the Watford Health Campus project will create around 1,000 jobs.

3.9.3 Employment floorspace during 2015/16 saw a gross loss of 14,953 sq m and a gain of 4,391 sq m **resulting in a net loss of 10,562 sq m**. About 25% of the total gross loss of employment floorspace was due to changes within the B use classes, 30% was changes to education and the largest percentage, 41%, was changes to residential or mixed redevelopment containing residential.

3.9.4 In terms of overall employment losses, 9,412 sq m (63%) was lost from office space with the remainder from various B class uses. **More than half of the office floorspace lost was under the prior approvals procedure associated with permitted**

**development rights.** This is a large increase on the previous year, where most of the office floorspace lost had planning permission and prior approvals only accounted for around 450 sq m loss of office floorspace.

3.10 During 2015/16 there have continued to be strong growth pressures on Watford. Our planning policies and supplementary planning documents shape the town in a positive way supporting the delivery of new homes, employment growth and essential infrastructure improvements. Watford remains an attractive place to live, work and invest. Growing land values and development costs continue to raise viability issues which will need careful management during the plan period to ensure that we attract high quality developments which meet our policy requirements and enhance the town over the coming years. However there have been many national changes to planning and housing legislation in recent years and these are being reflected in Local Plan Part 2: Sites and Development Management Policies which will be submitted for external examination in 2017.

3.11 Please note that these are only a few extracts from the Executive Summary - the complete Executive Summary is attached as Appendix 2.

#### 4.0 **Implications**

##### 4.1 **Financial**

4.1.1 The Head of Finance (shared services) comments that this is a monitoring and information report and has no direct financial implications.

##### 4.2 **Legal Issues** (Monitoring Officer)

4.2.1 The Head of Democracy and Governance comments that as stated in the body of the report the publication of the AMR is a statutory requirement.

##### 4.3 **Equalities**

There are no direct equalities impacts arising from this report. The application of existing policies will be covered by existing equalities assessments and the review and preparation of new policies will be subject to assessments at the appropriate time.

##### 4.4 **Potential Risks**

We consider that there are no risks with this report as it is an item for information.

Appendix 1. Watford's Monitoring Report 2016.

Appendix 2. Executive Summary – extract from the AMR 2016.

Appendix 3. A range of target led results and trends from the AMR 2016.

### **Background Papers**

No papers were used in the preparation of this report

### **File Reference:**

P:\SP1.Corporate Democracy & External\SP1.2 Members\  
SP1.2.2 Meetings & Reports\SP1.2.2.2 Cabinet Reports