



**WATFORD
BOROUGH
COUNCIL**

**Sustainable Transport Strategy
Task Group**

January 2022

Contents

	Page
Task Group members and witnesses	3
Proposed recommendations	3
Background to the task group	4
Overview of the task group's work	5
Conclusion, recommendations and comments	6
Bibliography/background papers	10
Appendix	
1. Task group proposal	11

Task group members

Councillor Amanda Grimston
Councillor Simon Feldman
Councillor Tom Osborn
Councillor Glen Saffery
Councillor Dennis Watling

Chair, Councillor for Meriden Ward
Councillor for Stanborough Ward
Councillor for Nascot Ward
Councillor for Woodside Ward
Councillor for Callowland Ward

Officer support

Jodie Kloss
Ona Ehimuan

Senior Democratic Services Officer
Democratic Services Officer

Witnesses

Tom Dobrashian

Group Head of Place Shaping, Watford Borough Council

Alexis Fuller

Sustainable Transport Officer, Watford Borough Council

Sue Jackson

Group Manager Strategy, Hertfordshire County Council

Proposed recommendations to present to Overview and Scrutiny Committee

1. The priority for the implementation of the strategy should be to reduce the number of short trips (under 2 miles) that are driven in Watford. This should be a determining factor in how actions contained in the strategy are prioritised.
2. In recognition of the close geographical relationships with neighbouring districts, ongoing partnership work should continue to be developed with areas that border Watford.
3. To build on the popularity of the bike share scheme, the council should explore with neighbouring authorities and other stakeholders how the scheme could be expanded beyond the borough's boundaries.
4. In considering whether there are any areas in Watford that would benefit from becoming a low-traffic neighbourhood, the highest priority should be working with and listening to residents and local stakeholders. Low traffic neighbourhoods could be considered if they have extensive community support designed to address a defined local issue.
5. The strategy, or associated documentation, should include a target to have a travel plan in place for every school in the borough and proactively work with schools and Hertfordshire County Council to achieve this.
6. Further work should be undertaken with local businesses and other stakeholders to improve transport links to employment areas that are not easily reached without a car to consider how access could be improved.

7. Recognising that accepting the need for wider change is different to making personal behavioural change, further work is needed to consider how to grow confidence in the alternatives to travelling by car.

Background to the task group

In recognition of the declared Climate Emergency, the borough's growing economy and the pressures on local infrastructure, Watford Borough Council and Hertfordshire County Council have developed a Sustainable Transport Strategy. The strategy has six objectives:

1. Cutting congestion: Reducing the number of car journeys by making cycling, walking or public transport the natural first choice for local trips.
2. Providing for future journeys: Investing in efficient and green ways to travel for both current and future residents and businesses.
3. Boosting health and wellbeing: Encouraging healthier travel choices that keep people physically fit and active, promote positive mental health, improve air quality, and make our streets safer.
4. Ensuring all our community benefits: Offering equality of access to transport for all.
5. Making best use of new technology: Providing green and environmentally friendly travel solutions.
6. Delivering a great customer experience: Promoting high quality, easy-to-use travel options.

The Sustainable Transport Strategy is a significant strategy for Watford Borough Council and Hertfordshire County Council to cover the next 20 years. The strategy reflects the need to respond to the Climate Emergency and includes actions which would have a wide impact on travel opportunities and choices for Watford residents.

Recognising the wider impact of this strategy and in particular the partnership with Hertfordshire County Council, the strategy went through a parallel process at Hertfordshire County Council. It was considered by the Highways and Transport Cabinet Panel in January 2022 before going to Hertfordshire's Cabinet in February 2022.

Overview and Scrutiny Committee agreed to establish the task group at its meeting on 21 October 2021 and confirmed the membership and chair, as set out above.

Overview of the task group's programme of work

The task group held four virtual meetings during November and December 2021. At the initial meeting, members received a high-level overview of the strategy and the associated programme. It was agreed that the task group would focus on a number of key areas within the strategy.

The meetings took the form of presentations from the programme's lead officers at Watford Borough Council and Hertfordshire County Council followed by discussions, questions and consideration of conclusions and recommendations.

The areas of the strategy that the task group focused on were:

- **Neighbourhoods** including street traffic filters and mini transport hubs.
- **Active travel** including walking and cycling routes.
- **Car parking and car clubs** including how to encourage greener travel.
- **Travel schemes** including the HERT link and park and ride.
- **Community engagement** including reward schemes and wider engagement plans.
- **Monitoring** including the oversight of the implementation of the strategy.

Additional research work was carried out by Democratic Services to inform the task group's work and to produce this report

A list of the witnesses who provided evidence to the task group is listed on page 3 and a bibliography is provided at the end of this report.

Conclusion, recommendations and comments

Summary of the task group's response to the strategy

The Sustainable Transport Strategy is a timely and ambitious strategy for Watford. The aims are commendable and will make Watford cleaner, more sustainable and healthier.

The borough is closely connected to the districts surrounding it. Strong and continued partnership with Hertfordshire County Council and neighbouring districts will be crucial in enabling residents to make greener transport choices. This partnership will also be the foundation of the ongoing work to secure county-wide and national funding streams by demonstrating the deliverability of schemes. The reach of the strategy affords the opportunity to effect change in travel habits beyond the borders of the borough to lead to a less congested, more sustainable and more active town and wider region.

Watford Borough Council will need to continue to work together with residents to enable them to make changes in their travel habits and to make alternatives to travelling by car more accessible for everyone in all areas of Watford. Ongoing communication, listening, and engagement with residents and businesses remain fundamental to the success of the strategy.

Recommendations

The priority for the implementation of the strategy should be to reduce the number of short trips (under two miles) that are driven in Watford. This should be a determining factor in how actions contained in the strategy are prioritised.

Watford is a compact town with significant opportunities to grow the levels of active travel and public transport usage. Data shows that 68% of all journeys taken by Watford residents are less than five miles and 32% are less than two miles.¹

There is an opportunity to prioritise trips of less than two miles which make a significant contribution to greenhouse emissions and congestion in the town. In the morning peak, many roads in Watford see average speeds below 10mph.² These shorter journeys are those which could most easily be converted to active travel, walking or cycling, or by public transport with benefits to individuals' health as well as congestion in the town.

Reducing the proportion of trips of this distance taken by private motor vehicle will make a major contribution to the aims of the strategy and a target to convert them to other means of travelling should be included in the implementation of the strategy.

¹ Transforming Travel in Watford, the Strategy for 2021 to 2041, Supporting Document, p. 18

² Transforming Travel in Watford, the Strategy for 2021 to 2041, Supporting Document, p. 4

In recognition of the close geographical relationships with neighbouring districts, ongoing partnership work should continue to be developed with areas that border Watford.

Watford and the surrounding areas are a significant conurbation in South West Hertfordshire. The borough and district boundaries are, in many ways, artificial in the way people travel and access local amenities.

A number of the schemes considered as part of the review of the strategy will rely on close cooperation and partnership working with neighbouring districts and the county council. The proposed park and ride schemes with potential sites, identified by the Hertfordshire Growth and Transport Plan, at Junction 20 of the M25 and Junction 5 of the M1 would be based outside the borough. Park and ride schemes would predominantly serve those travelling into Watford from the wider region. The benefits to Watford would be indirect in terms of reducing congestion and encouraging economic growth.

In order to maximise the connectivity, any park and ride scheme should be designed to dovetail with the proposed Hertfordshire and Essex Rapid Transit (HERT) system and the principle of interconnectivity, including to a variety of key sites in the borough, should remain central to these schemes.

The success of any such scheme will be built on strong partnerships to ensure that it benefits residents of Watford as well as the wider region.

To build on the popularity of the bike share scheme, the council should explore with neighbouring authorities and other stakeholders how the scheme could be expanded beyond the borough's boundaries.

A specific area where close partnership working could reap significant benefits would be the extension of the Beryl Bike bike-share scheme beyond the boundaries of the borough of Watford. The scheme has been successful and is well-used by residents, despite the limitations on movement during the pandemic. The introduction of the scheme led to 100,000 cycle journeys in a little over a year.³

The strategy envisages that there would be transport hubs where bike-share bays would be located. These would serve those coming into Watford for their onward journeys and the extension of the scheme into areas such as Croxley Green and Bushey would enable residents who live outside the borough to make more local journeys by cycling.

The task group further considered that similar exploration should be made of extending the reach of the Demand Responsive Transport service (ArrivaClick) that currently operates in the borough. This would equally serve residents of neighbouring areas for whom Watford is a destination for employment and leisure purposes. It is considered that this could also bring benefits to staff, patients and visitors to Watford General Hospital and the other sites within West Hertfordshire Hospital Trust.

³ Transforming Travel in Watford, the Strategy for 2021 to 2041, Supporting Document, p. 11

In considering whether there are any areas in Watford that would benefit from becoming a low-traffic neighbourhood, the highest priority should be working with and listening to residents and local stakeholders. Low traffic neighbourhoods could be considered if they have extensive community support designed to address a defined local issue.

The task group heard evidence about the potential for trialling traffic filters, also called 'low-traffic neighbourhoods'. These modal filters, designed to remove 'rat-running', seek to create healthier, less congested neighbourhoods without limiting residents and emergency services' access. Benefits to low-traffic neighbourhoods identified in the strategy include: increases in the numbers of people walking and cycling, a decrease in road-traffic injuries, and fewer car trips.⁴

A number of these have been trialled elsewhere, notably in London, with mixed success. The task group heard that the careful implementation of these schemes, based on extensive engagement, was paramount to their success. The approach set out in the strategy, which focuses on analysis of suitable areas, engagement, trials and monitoring, is the best way to ensure that any such schemes meet the needs of local residents. A low-traffic neighbourhood is intended to be trialled elsewhere in Hertfordshire and the results in congestion and the views of residents will provide useful learning for Watford.

The strategy, or associated documentation, should include a target to have a travel plan in place for every school in the borough and proactively work with schools and Hertfordshire County Council to achieve this.

The congestion surrounding schools remains an issue in many neighbourhoods. Travelling to school on foot or by bicycle will have lasting benefits for young people's health. In Watford, 20% of year 6 pupils are obese, which is in line with national averages⁵. A reduction in the number of vehicles in the roads surrounding schools will ensure a safer environment for children and young people as well as reducing air pollution. The strategy sets out the potential for 'school streets' to manage the amount of traffic using roads where schools are situated at certain times of day.

Schools can develop active travel plans which contain actions to increase the number of pupils travelling to school in healthier and more sustainable ways. All new schools are required to have an active travel plan; as such very few schools in Watford have a plan in place. Existing schools are not required to have one and so there is an opportunity to work with schools and the team at Hertfordshire County Council to extend these to all schools.

A target to ensure every school in the borough has a travel plan would reap significant benefits for school pupils, residents who live in close proximity to schools and the schools themselves.

⁴ Transforming Travel in Watford, the Strategy for 2021 to 2041, Supporting Document, p. 24

⁵ Transforming Travel in Watford, the Strategy for 2021 to 2041, Supporting Document, p. 25

Further work should be undertaken with local businesses and other stakeholders to improve transport links to employment areas that are not easily reached without a car to consider how access could be improved.

There are a number of areas within Watford, particularly certain employment zones, which are very difficult to access without a car. These include the Tolpits Lane industrial area where there is no bus service or footway for pedestrians to access a number of the units.

The task group recommends that further consultation be undertaken with businesses and other stakeholders in these areas to develop solutions to improve access. This would benefit both employees and customers of these businesses. There could be a need for further promotion of the bike share scheme or the Demand Responsive Transport service which would both assist with access.

Like schools, many businesses would also benefit from an active travel plan to ensure that employees and customers are enabled to make use of the sustainable transport options available to access the sites and this is reflected in the strategy. Ongoing partnership with the business community will be vital for the targets within the strategy to be met and they will bring a valuable perspective to the process. The engagement process for the strategy demonstrated a willingness in the business community to participate actively and this is to be encouraged.

Recognising that accepting the need for wider change is different to making personal behavioural change, further work is needed to consider how to grow confidence in the alternatives to travelling by car.

Changing the way that people travel is necessary if the goals to reach net carbon zero are to be achieved. The transportation sector is responsible for more greenhouse gases than any other in the UK and road transport is the most significant contributor within this.⁶

The public engagement for this strategy showed that while the vast majority of the respondents were supportive of the need for change, there was less commitment to making personal changes in travel habits.

Building the confidence to change travel modes will be vital to the success of the strategy. It will be necessary to ensure that infrastructure is in place to enable these changes. This will require funding commitments from Hertfordshire County Council in the areas that they are responsible for. The task group's view was that new infrastructure and any reviews of highway uses should prioritise cyclists and pedestrians in particular. But public transport improvements, charging infrastructure for electric vehicles and other measures in the strategy are also needed.

Consistent branding across the communications surrounding the strategy will be vital to grow public confidence in the alternatives to using private cars. The task group also supports the proposals in the strategy for case studies and local champions to raise awareness of the

⁶ Transforming Travel in Watford, the Strategy for 2021 to 2041, Supporting Document, p. 4

benefits of sustainable travel as well as those designed to reward the public for travelling sustainably, providing they remain accessible to residents without access to specific technologies.

Bibliography/background papers

Report to Overview and Scrutiny Committee – [New Scrutiny Task Group – Sustainable Transport Strategy](#) – 21 October 2021

Sustainable Transport Strategy 2021-2041 – [strategy document](#)

Sustainable Transport Strategy 2021-2041 – [supporting document](#)

The task group would like to thank all their witnesses who generously gave time to assist with this review.

Appendix:

**Watford Borough Council Overview and Scrutiny Committee
Scrutiny Task Group Scope and Terms of Reference**

Scrutiny review title	Sustainable Transport Strategy Consultation Review
Scrutiny proposer	Councillor Amanda Grimston
Details of specific area for review	<p>In recognition of the Climate Emergency, the borough's growing economy and the pressures on local infrastructure, Watford Borough Council and Hertfordshire County Council are jointly developing a Sustainable Transport Strategy. The strategy has six objectives:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Cutting congestion: Reducing the number of car journeys by making cycling, walking or public transport the natural first choice for local trips.2. Providing for future journeys: Investing in efficient and green ways to travel for both current and future residents and businesses.3. Boosting health and wellbeing: Encouraging healthier travel choices that keep people physically fit and active, promote positive mental health, improve air quality, and make our streets safer.4. Ensuring all our community benefits: Offering equality of access to transport for all.5. Making best use of new technology: Providing green and environmentally friendly travel solutions.6. Delivering a great customer experience: Promoting high quality, easy-to-use travel options. <p>The draft Sustainable Transport Strategy sets out key actions to make travel more sustainable which include proposals on:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Active travel2. Longer journeys3. Alternatives to car ownership4. Town centre5. Supporting change6. Moving goods <p>The draft strategy went out for public consultation in August 2021 for 8 weeks. This provided opportunities for residents and local organisations to feed in their views on the proposals. A number of member engagement events also took place which were open to Watford councillors and local Hertfordshire county councillors.</p>

	<p>This process followed an initial public consultation on a draft strategy earlier in 2021.</p> <p>The outcome of the consultation and engagement exercises will give the project team the chance to review the draft strategy and make any desired changes in line with the feedback.</p> <p>The strategy will be reviewed by Hertfordshire’s Highways and Transport Cabinet Panel on 31 January 2022 before going to Hertfordshire’s Cabinet on 21 February 2022.</p> <p>There is an opportunity for a scrutiny task group to look at certain key areas of the final draft strategy before it goes to Watford’s Cabinet on 28 February 2022. This will provide similar opportunities to non-executive councillors for Hertfordshire who will look at the strategy at their Highways and Transport Cabinet Panel.</p>
<p>Why this has been proposed for review, including the council priorities it supports</p>	<p>This is a significant strategy for Watford to cover the next 20 years and incorporating feedback from the public is vital to its success. The strategy reflects the climate emergency and includes actions which would have a wide impact on travel opportunities and choices for Watford residents. The collaboration with Hertfordshire County Council ensures the reach of the actions. It is important that non-executive members are included in the development of the proposals as they will be key partners in communicating with residents and supporting its delivery. Councillors also have a valuable perspective as community representatives with a strong understanding of the neighbourhoods within Watford.</p> <p>It supports the priority for a thriving, diverse and creative town.</p>
<p>Purpose / objectives of the review, including key questions</p>	<p>To consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A number of key actions for the areas outlined in the strategy. These key areas could include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Neighbourhoods including street traffic filters and mini transport hubs - Car parking including the review of supply and demand, parking charges and how to encourage greener travel. - Travel schemes including the HERT link, uses for the Croxley rail line, the DRT and park and ride. - Community engagement including reward schemes and wider engagement plans. - Monitoring including the oversight of the implementation of the strategy.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What factors and/or potential issues should be borne in mind for these key areas in the implementation phases. • Feedback from the public consultation. • Whether any other issues raised in the public consultation should be further addressed in the strategy or by other means. • How to ensure ongoing public engagement with the aims of the strategy and associated actions.
Any areas excluded from the scope	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Detailed review of raw data from the public consultation.
Desired outcomes / indicators of success	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An understanding of the aspirations of the strategy. • An understanding of the key areas for action under the strategy. • To secure wider ownership of the strategy by non-executive Watford councillors. • To review key aspects of the strategy supported by an understanding of the feedback received in the public consultation and of wider residents' views. • To make recommendations to Watford BC's Cabinet that contribute to the success of the strategy. These recommendations would be based on the consultation feedback and members' wider local understanding.
Timescale and key dates, including proposed meeting format	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consultation closes 13 October 2021 • Report establishing task group to Overview and Scrutiny 21 October 2021 • Task group to meet during November/December 2021. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meetings to be held in private with key officers from Watford BC and Hertfordshire CC. • Meetings to take the form of a brief presentation on a key area of the strategy and discussion of the proposed actions and recommendations. • Strategy to go to Hertfordshire's Highways and Transport Cabinet Panel on 31 January 2022. • Task group report to Overview and Scrutiny Committee 3 February 2022. Agenda published 26 January 2022. • Report to Hertfordshire's Cabinet on 21 February 2022. • Report to Watford's Cabinet (to include task group report as an appendix) 28 February 2022
Key departmental lead officer	WBC Tom Dobrashian, Group Head of Place Shaping Ben Martin, Head of Development Management Jack Green, Spatial Planning Manager

	<p>Alexis Fuller, Sustainable Transport Officer Jodie Kloss, Senior Democratic Services Officer</p> <p>HCC Sue Jackson - HCC Group Manager Strategy, Highways Strategy and Implementation Rupert Thacker - HCC Head of Highways Strategy and Implementation Nicola Ffrench – HCC Strategy and Programme Manager David Swan – HCC Highways Locality Manager</p>
Witnesses	WBC and HCC officers listed above.
What activities need to be taken to achieve the outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reviewing the list of key areas of the strategy where further member input would be valuable. • Producing a summary report of the responses to the public consultation. • The task group to review those key areas of the strategy with an understanding of the summary of the consultation responses.
Key policies / documentation / baseline information needed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Final draft of the strategy following public consultation. • Report on the summary of responses to the public consultation. • Report on feedback on the draft strategy, May 2021.
Any other sources of evidence (e.g., site visit)	N/A
Risks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Insufficient engagement with non-executive members and subsequent dissatisfaction with the strategy. • Loss of the opportunity to understand residents' views from the wider perspective held by ward councillors.