

Part A

Report to: Cabinet

Date of meeting: 13 March 2023

Report author: Associate Director of Planning, Infrastructure and Economy

Title: Authority Monitoring Report 2021/22

1.0 Summary

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

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

2.0 Risks

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

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

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

3.0 Recommendations

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

Further information:

Thomas Shaw

thomas.shaw@watford.gov.uk

01923 278617

Report approved by: Jack Green, Spatial Planning Manager

4.0 Detailed proposal

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

5.0 **Implications**

5.1 **Financial**

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

5.2 **Legal Issues** (Monitoring Officer)

5.2.1 The Group Head of Democracy and Governance comments that all legal implications are referenced and dealt with in the main body of the report.

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

5.3.1 Having had regard to the council's obligations under s149, it is considered that there are no direct equalities impacts arising from this report. The application of existing policies will be covered by existing equalities assessments and the review and preparation of new policies will be subject to assessments at the appropriate time.

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

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

5.4 **Staffing**

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

5.5 **Accommodation**

5.5.1 N/A

5.6 **Community Safety/Crime and Disorder**

5.6.1 N/A

5.7 **Sustainability**

5.7.1 N/A

6.0 **Appendices**

6.1 Appendix 1: Watford Authority Monitoring Report 2021-2022

7.0 **Background papers**

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