

Executive Summary

Authorities' Monitoring Reports ('AMRs') have an important purpose in the ongoing management of planning policy and must be prepared and published at least once a year; Watford's Monitoring Report 2013 covers the period 1 April 2012 to 31 March 2013. The AMR outlines the progress made on local plan documents and uses various indicators and monitoring mechanisms to assess the effectiveness of planning policies and whether we are achieving local plan objectives.

Local Plan

- **The Local Plan Part 1: Core Strategy was adopted on 30 January 2013**, and sets out the council's vision for development and conservation in Watford to 2031.
- **An initial consultation of the Local Plan Part 2 took place between 4 November and 16 December 2013.** This contained initial site allocation proposals, draft development management policies, and draft town centre policies.

Housing

- **There were 541 net housing completions during 2012/13** ahead of the Core Strategy housing target of an average 260 dwellings per annum. **Watford can demonstrate a 5 year housing land supply, which is 137.7%, above the National Planning Policy Framework requirement of 105%.** Watford is continuing to make good progress in delivering new homes.
- **Affordable dwelling completions numbered 184**, averaging 34% of the 541 total net housing completions for 2012/13. All of the affordable housing completions for 2012/13 conformed to the policy that applied at the time of permission which was 30% affordable housing, rather than the 35% affordable housing presently required.
- **The proportion of houses to flats completed has risen from 22% last year to 29% in 2012/13 with flats having decreased from 78% to 71% of the gross housing completions.** The number of properties built with three or more bedrooms has increased to 27% from 20% last year and nearly half of all dwellings built during 2012/13 are two bedrooms.
- **In 2012/13, 97% of housing completions were on previously developed land**, exceeding our local target which continues to be 80% of all residential development on previously developed land.

Business Development and Employment

- Appendix 8 shows that there has been a small net loss of 1,358 sq.m. in B use class floorspace within allocated employment areas since 2006. **Overall, this indicates that existing policies are protecting employment within allocated employment areas.**
- **Watford's Core Strategy seeks a minimum of 7,000 additional jobs in the district between 2006-2031. There is an encouraging increasing trend of approximately 1,000 total jobs per year in Watford since 2009.** Morrisons have recently opened their new supermarket on 25 November at Ascot Road, on the former Royal Mail depot site in West Watford, creating about 270 jobs in the area. This is the first part of the Western Gateway (Ascot Road) regeneration scheme to take shape.
- **100% of employment development within Watford took place on previously developed land, exceeding the Core Strategy target of 90%.** No greenfield land has been used for any employment development during the period monitored since 2006/07.

Sustainable Development

- **There has been a reducing trend in Carbon Dioxide (CO₂) emissions overall in Watford for the period 2005-2011 in line with policy objectives, and there has been a reduction of 1.5 tonnes CO₂ per person since 2005, from 6.4 tonnes to 4.9 tonnes.** Watford Borough Council's own local authority operations have decreased their gross emissions to 2,479 tonnes of CO₂. This is a total reduction of 10% compared with 2011/12 and a 19% reduction from the base year 2009/10.
- **During 2012/13, average household water use has declined in all the Hertfordshire districts including Watford,** and the county average of 149 l/h/d is presently much nearer the England and Wales average of 142 l/h/d, than previously. **The reducing trend conforms to the Core Strategy aim of minimising water consumption (Policy SD2).**
- **The number of planning applications identified as including renewable energy sources appears to be increasing.** As well as individual householders buying in to the concept of renewable energy by having solar panels fitted to their existing properties there is evidence that various forms of renewable energy are increasingly being incorporated into the designs for new residential development and other developments for community use, such as schools.

Green Infrastructure

- **Targets to maintain the total amount of open space managed by WBC and the amount managed to Green Flag Award standard have been met in 2012/13 - both are unchanged.** It is the fifth consecutive year that Woodside Playing Fields and Cheslyn Gardens have been awarded the Green Flag and the seventh year for Cassiobury Park.
- **The council's intention is to maintain the general extent of the Green Belt, as contained within the Core Strategy Policy GI2. Electronic mapping of the Green Belt onto our GIS system was undertaken in 2012 and the resulting measurement of 407 hectares equates to 19% of Watford's total area.** The figure of 407 hectares is a result of more accurate measuring and does not show any loss in Watford's Green Belt. The predominantly urban nature of Watford means that the protection of its surrounding Green Belt land is of particular importance.
- **A bid for external funding has been successful for Cassiobury Park with £418,000 awarded by the Heritage Lottery Funding/BIG lottery funding. If we are successful at Stage 2 of the bidding process (February 2014), the £6.6 million project will see a huge range of improvements to the park.** From the evidence available, our policies seem to be serving to protect our biodiversity, along with the council co-ordinating with a broad partnership of local organisations and actively improving the wildlife value of all the sites it manages.

Urban Design and Built Heritage

- **'Building for Life' assessments, showing the level of quality in new housing developments surveyed this year average at 9.5 which is an improvement on the average of the scores seen in 2011/12 which was 8.8, in line with our objective of increasing the quality of design.**
- **In 2012, a successful bid was made to the War Memorials Trust for financial support for works to the Peace Memorial and to English Heritage for a grant to help with renovating listed and locally listed chest tombs in St Mary's churchyard. Restoration works have since taken place during 2013 and the tombs are no longer considered to be 'at risk'.** Watford Borough Council aims to further reduce the number of listed buildings at risk of decay.
- **A public consultation on the draft Conservation Areas Management Plan took place between 4 April 2013 - 15 May 2013 and a revised version of the document was subsequently adopted by Watford Borough Council Cabinet on 8 July 2013.** Oxhey was designated a conservation area in the spring of 2013 and a character appraisal document will be completed in line with those already completed for the other 9 conservation areas.

Transport and Projects

- **Recent initiatives to lessen congestion and improve sustainable transport include joint working on the Grand Union towpath improvement project; improved cycle parking facilities and the installation of electric car re-charge points and some new bus shelters across the town, with further installations planned.** The 2011 census showed that fewer Watford residents travel to work by car than in 2001 - 54.6% rather than the 60.5% in 2001, and more residents travel to work by public transport - 19.5% as opposed to 14.1% in 2001.
- **In July 2013, HCC and London Underground were granted the legal powers needed to build, operate and maintain the Croxley Rail Link.** Design work is underway and construction is expected to start in 2014, with the target date for trains to be running by 2016.
- **In addition to Ascot Road, where the new Morrisons recently opened, substantial progress has been made with other major development projects such as Charter Place, Watford Health Campus and the town centre improvement works.** These will lead to additional jobs and homes along with improved retail, transport, leisure, healthcare and other supporting services and facilities.

Infrastructure delivery

- **It has been identified that there is a need for up to 4 additional primary schools (or 10 to 11 form entry classes) by 2031 and that a new cemetery will be required to serve the borough by 2014.** One option is to locate a new cemetery on council owned land at Paddock Road. This site is located within Hertsmere BC and we could not allocate this site in our Local Plan. However, we have asked for views and alternative suggestions on a cemetery at Paddock Road and Primary school provision on sites at Ascot Road, Lanchester House (Hempstead Road) and Orchard School as part of the Site Allocations' initial consultation from 4 November to 16 December 2013.
- **The detailed planning application for Watford Health Campus' road infrastructure was approved by Watford Borough Council in December 2013.** Work will start on the new link and access road in spring 2014, with completion expected by the end of 2015. This will help to reduce traffic congestion in West Watford and improve access to the hospital.

Conclusion

Our local plan policies have been successfully working to help ensure that Watford, jointly working with partners, continues to provide homes, leisure, employment opportunities and transport infrastructure; guiding development to where we want it to go, promoting high quality design and sustainable development and protecting and enhancing the best of the built environment; maintaining the quantity and quality of our green spaces and improving the overall environment as much as possible.