

PART A

Report to: Cabinet
Date of meeting: 16 February 2015
Report of: Head of Regeneration and Development
Title: Watford's Monitoring Report 2014

1.0 SUMMARY

- 1.1 Authorities' Monitoring Reports ('**AMRs**') must be prepared and published at least once a year in accordance with planning regulations, and Watford's Monitoring Report has been delivered annually since such regulations came into force in 2005. The AMR outlines the progress made on the local plan timetable and assesses the effectiveness of planning policies against various targets and indicators to see whether we are achieving local plan objectives. Watford's Monitoring Report 2014 covers the period 1 April 2013 to 31 March 2014.
- 1.2 The purpose of this Cabinet report is to raise awareness of the information provided by the AMR 2014, which must be published on the council's website as soon as reasonably practicable.
- 1.3 Members' attention is drawn to the Executive Summary, Appendix 2 to the Cabinet Report (or pages 5-8 of the full AMR 2014). The Executive Summary will also be available to download separately from the full AMR 2014 on the website.
- 1.4 There is no requirement for formal public consultation; the AMR 2014 has previously undergone internal consultation within the council and with Hertfordshire County Council; it also features in the Members' Bulletin (January 2015).

2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

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

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3.0 **DETAILED PROPOSAL**

- 3.1 Watford's Monitoring Report 2014 covers the period 1 April 2013 to 31 March 2014. Additional information that has subsequently become known with regard to more recent developments is supplied within the commentary where it is practical to do so.
- 3.2 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.
- 3.3 The regulations state which information must be included; for example, progress made on the timetable for the production of documents within the local plan; information such as the number of net additional dwellings, in order to assess the effectiveness of planning policies against various targets and indicators. Further details are available in Appendix 3: Summary of the AMR process – 2014.
- 3.4 Watford's Monitoring Report 2014 focuses on a suite 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
- 3.5 **Some extracts follow from the Executive Summary, available as Appendix 2 to the Cabinet Report (or pages 5-8 of the full AMR 2014).**
- 3.6 **Local Plan**
- The Community Infrastructure Charging Schedule (CIL) was found sound by an inspector in August 2014, and will come into effect on 1st April 2015. This followed consultation in 2013 and again during February/March 2014, after which the Draft Charging Schedule was submitted to the Planning Inspectorate in April 2014.
- 3.7 The second consultation on the Local Plan Part 2 is running from 17th December 2014 to 4th February 2015; this contains policies for considering applications for planning permission and identifies specific sites for development and the type of development that would be appropriate. An initial consultation took place from the 4th November 2013 for six weeks – responses made and new evidence were taken into account.
- 3.8 **Housing**
- 398 homes were built in 2013/14. Since 2006, Watford has delivered 3,369 of the 6,500 housing target set in the Core Strategy for the period 2006-31. The amount delivered is an average of 421 per annum, compared to the average target of 260 dwellings per annum.
- 3.9 Watford can demonstrate a 5 year housing land supply of 152.2%, which is above the National Planning Policy Framework requirement of 105%.

3.10 **Business Development and Employment**

Watford's Core Strategy seeks a minimum of 7,000 additional jobs in the district over the period 2006-2031. About 270 jobs were created in the area with the opening of Morrison's supermarket in November 2013 and the proposals to redevelop Charter Place should create about 1,100 new jobs across the retail, hospitality and leisure sectors and up to 500 temporary construction jobs. The East of England Forecasting Model (EEFM) 2013 suggests that the scale of job growth in Watford is 3,600 jobs for the period 2006 to 2014.

3.11 There was an unusual high net loss of 26,161 sq.m. employment floorspace during 2013/14 within the traditional employment type B use classes. Just over 50% of the loss was due to the demolition of the former Royal Mail Depot at Ascot Road, where there is the new Morrisons supermarket and a primary school is under construction. This development was identified in the Core Strategy as part of the Western Gateway Special Policy Area.

3.12 **Sustainable Development**

There has been a reducing trend in Carbon Dioxide emissions overall in Watford for the period 2005-2011 in line with policy objectives, although there has been an increase between 2011 and 2012. However, emissions have increased in 403 out of 406 local authorities across the UK. The main drivers of the increase in UK emissions in 2012 were an increase in residential gas use due to 2012 being a colder year than 2011, and increased coal for electricity generation.

3.13 The Council monitors air quality at several locations across the borough. On Rickmansworth Road close to the Town Hall, continuous 'real-time' monitoring of nitrogen dioxide and PM₁₀ particulates is undertaken. NO₂ concentrations have remained fairly constant and the annual mean objective of 40 g/m³ has not been exceeded during this time at the Town Hall monitoring station.

3.14 **Green Infrastructure**

Four of Watford's parks have received Green Flag awards this year, with the addition of Oxhey Park, for the first time; our aim to maintain the total amount of open space managed by WBC to Green Flag Award standard has therefore been exceeded. It is the sixth consecutive year that Woodside Playing Fields and Cheslyn Gardens have been awarded the Green Flag and the eighth year for Cassiobury Park.

3.15 The importance of open space and the Green Belt to Watford's predominantly urban environment is recognised and protected by Core Strategy Policy GI1: Green Infrastructure and GI2: Green Belt and additional saved policies from the Watford District Plan 2000; the Green Belt currently measures 407 hectares, equating to 19% of Watford's total area, and remains unchanged from last year.

3.16 **Transport and Projects and Infrastructure Delivery**

Planning permission to redevelop Charter Place and refurbish Intu Watford (formerly the Harlequin), was granted on the 5 February 2014. The proposal is for a £100 million development to include new retail space, a cinema and leisure complex, a new

restaurant hub, a covered 'niche' market area and public realm improvements. Construction is expected to begin in 2015, with completion due in 2017. On the 10th October 2014, the existing traditional market was moved to a new home in the centre of the town, accessible from the High Street near the flyover and from Beechen Grove, near Clarendon Road. It has been created from shipping containers and is spread over 2 floors, making a unique and attractive space.

3.17 Significant progress has been made over the last few years in delivering the Health Campus. The planning application for the infrastructure works required for the new access road was approved by Watford Borough Council in December 2013. Ecological and other preparatory works for the road have started, with construction expected to commence in March 2015. The planning permission incorporating both outline and detailed elements for the mixed-use Watford Health Campus was issued by the council on the 6 January 2015, following completion of a S106 planning obligation.

3.18 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. A 2 form entry school opened in September 2014 at Lanchester House, Hempstead Road; a new school building is under construction at Ascot Road although the first form entries for the new school opened in September 2014 and have been temporarily housed in the Lanchester building, until the new school building is finished, due summer 2015. Additional provision is proposed in the Local Plan Part 2.

4.0 **IMPLICATIONS**

4.1 **Financial**

4.1.1 The Shared Director of Finance comments that there are no financial implications in this report.

4.2 **Legal Issues** (Monitoring Officer)

4.2.1 The Head of Democracy and Governance comments that it is a legal requirement to publish the AMR.

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 2014.

Appendix 2. Executive Summary – extract from AMR 2014.

Appendix 3. Summary of the AMR process – 2014.

Background Papers

No papers were used in the preparation of this report

File Reference

LP.41