

Watford Borough Council
Authority Monitoring Report
2023 - 2024

January 2025



Executive Summary

Monitoring Indicator	Watford Local Plan policy	Policy target	Previous Monitoring Year (MY)	Current MY	Target met in current MY?	Compared to previous MY
Residential completions	Policy H03.1	784 dwellings per annum (dpa) completed, 13,328 over the plan period, maintain a 5-year supply	778 Net additional dwellings (dws)	751 Net additional dwellings (dws)	No	↓
Residential delivery within the Core Development Area	CDA2.1; CDA 2.2 CDA 2.3	No specific target set	352 dws (45%)	136 dws (18%)	-	↓
Residential delivery within the Watford Gateway Strategic Development Area	CDA 2.1	No specific target set	9 dws (1%)	0 dws (0%)	-	↓
Residential delivery within the Town Centre Strategic Development Area	CDA 2.2	No specific target set	55 dws (7%)	-6 dws (-1%)	-	↓
Residential delivery within the Colne Valley Strategic Development Area	CDA 2.3	No specific target set	288 dws (37%)	142 dws (19%)	-	↓
Residential delivery on PDL	Policy SS1.1	80% of all development	93%	99%	Yes	↑
Number of dwellings granted permission	Policy H03.1	784 dpa completed, 13,328 over the plan period, maintain a 5-year supply	838 dws	859 dws	Yes	↑
Lapse Rate	Policy H03.1	Keep lapse rate as low as possible	4%	3%	Yes	↑
Density of new residential development within the Core Development Area dwellings per hectare (dph)	Policy H03.2	Minimum target of 95 dph within the CDA	241dph	143dph	Yes	↓
Density of new residential development outside the Core Development Area (dph)	Policy H03.2	Minimum target of 45 dwellings per hectare outside the CDA.	82dph	84dph	Yes	↑
Size of dwellings completed	Policy H03.2	20% of all completions to be family sized	6%	18%	No	↑
Affordable housing delivery- by unit	Policy H03.3 Policy H03.4	Specific target set by habitable room not by unit	94 dws (12%)	265 dws (35%)	-	↑

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Affordable housing delivery- by habitable room	Policy H03.3 Policy H03.4	35% of all habitable rooms on sites of 10 or more dwellings to be affordable.	196 habitable rooms (14%)	444 habitable rooms (31%)	No	↑
Number of applications for residential conversions permitted	Policy H03.9	No specific target set	2 applications	6 applications	-	↑
Number of specialist and care bed spaces completed	Policy H03.5	102 bed spaces over the plan period (6 bed spaces per year).	0	0	No	No change
Number of student bed spaces	Policy H03.6	No specific target set	0	0	-	No change
Number of Gypsy and Traveller pitches granted planning permission.	Policy H03.8	Meet the identified need for two pitches over the plan period.	0	0	No	No change
Number of self-build or custom build plots provided and completed.	Policy H03.7	Proposals for 20 houses or more to provide plots to contribute towards meeting the needs of those on the self-build register	0	1	-	↑
Building standards for new homes	Policy H03.10	All new homes to comply with M4(2) accessibility standard.	<i>No data available</i>	332 dwellings granted on major applications	Yes	-
Building standards for new homes	Policy H03.10	4% of all new dwellings to meet M4(3) accessibility standard.	<i>No data available</i>	10 dwellings granted on major applications	Yes	-
Building standards for new homes	Policy H03.10	2% all dwellings on developments of 50 or more dwellings to be dementia friendly.	<i>No data available</i>	0 dwellings granted on major applications	No	-
Net Industrial floorspace	Policy SS1.1 Policy EM4.2	No net loss of industrial floorspace	-8,082sqm	6,662sqm	Yes	↑
Net Office floorspace	Policy EM4.3	No net loss of E(g)(i) class office floorspace	-6,399sqm	-5,709sqm	No	↓
Net delivery of employment floorspace	Policy EM4.1	No net loss of employment floorspace	-14,481sqm	953sqm	Yes	↑
Net delivery of employment floorspace within the designated industrial areas	Policy EM4.2	No net loss of industrial floorspace within the designated industrial areas	-7,737sqm	6,656sqm	Yes	↑

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Net delivery of E(g)(i) office floorspace within the Primary Office Location and the Town Centre	Policy EM4.2	No net loss of office floorspace within the Primary Office Location or the Town Centre	69sqm	-3,556sqm	No	↓
Delivery of employment floorspace outside designated employment locations	Policy EM4.4	No net loss of floorspace	-6,813sqm	-2,147sqm	No	↓
Employment land available on extant permissions	Policy EM4.1	No specific target set	53,932sqm	39,094 sqm	-	↓
Net delivery of retail E(a) floorspace over the monitoring year	Policy VT5.1	No specific target set	Town Centre: 144sqm	Town Centre: 0sqm	-	↓
			District Centre: 58sqm	District Centre: 0sqm		
			Local Centres: 98sqm	Local Centres: -233sqm		
Net delivery of main town centre uses over the monitoring year	Policy VT5.1	No specific target set	Town Centre: 1,005sqm	Town Centre: 0sqm	-	↓
			District Centre: 175sqm	District Centre: 39sqm		
			Local Centres: 46sqm	Local Centres: 220sqm		
Percentage of designated centres which are in main town centre uses	Policy VT5.1	No specific target set	Town Centre: 84%	Town Centre: <i>No data available</i>	-	-
			<i>No data available</i>	District Centre: 80%		
			<i>No data available</i>	Local Centres: 71%		
Vacancy rate in the designated centres	Policy VT5.1	No specific target set	Town Centre 2023: 8.9%	Town Centre: <i>No data available</i>	-	-
Vacancy rate in the designated centres	Policy VT5.1	No specific target set	<i>No data available</i>	District Centre: 4.1%	-	-
			<i>No data available</i>	Local Centres: 5.5%	-	-
Number of planning applications where Policies QD6.2; or QD6.4 is listed as a reason for refusal	Policy QD6.2 QD6.4	No specific target set	<i>No data available</i>	21	-	-

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Number of planning applications where Policies QD6.3 is listed as a reason for refusal	Policy QD6.3	No specific target set	<i>No data available</i>	1	-	-
Number of applications completed over the MY that exceed the base building heights	Policy QD6.5	No specific target set	3	4	-	↑
Number of developments granted planning permission over the monitoring year that exceeded the base building heights	Policy QD6.5	No specific target set	2	4	-	↑
Number of applications refused over the monitoring year where Policy QD6.5 (Building Height) is listed as a reason for refusal	Policy QD6.5	No specific target set	<i>No data available</i>	0	-	-
Number of assets on the heritage at risk register	Policy HE7.2	Reduce the number of buildings on the heritage at risk register.	6	6	-	No change
Number of applications granted contrary to advice from Historic England	Policy HE7.2	No specific target set	0	0	-	No change
Percentage of carbon reduction since 2018	Policy CC8.1	Reduction in carbon emissions over the plan period	7.5%	12.7%	Yes	↑
Percentage of non-residential developments which meet BREEAM standards	Policy CC8.2	100% of developments meeting either excellent or very good	<i>No data available</i>	3 major applications	-	-
Number of new residential permissions that meet carbon emission standards	Policy CC8.1	19% energy efficiency above Part L of the Building Regulations.	<i>No data available</i>	789 new residential permissions on major applications	-	-

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Number of new homes achieving 110 litres/person/day	Policy CC8.3	100% of new homes	<i>No data available</i>	351 new homes delivered on major residential developments	-	-
Number of Air Quality Management Areas	Policy CC8.4	Reduce the number of Air Quality Management Areas	2	2	-	No change
Number of planning applications refused on pollution grounds	Policy CC8.5	Zero refusals	<i>No data available</i>	1	No	-
Number of Environment Agency objections to planning applications.	Policy NE9.3 Policy NE9.4 Policy NE9.5	No planning permissions granted contrary to the advice of the Environment Agency on flooding and water quality grounds.	0	0	Yes	No change
Net gain/loss of designated open space	Policy NE9.6 Policy NE9.7	No net loss of designated open space	0 losses	0 losses	Yes	No change
Net gain in Biodiversity	Policy NE9.8	10% net gain	<i>No data available</i>	1 major application completed	Yes	-
Delivery of Infrastructure	Policy IN10.1 Policy IN10.2	Deliver the infrastructure set out in the Infrastructure Delivery Plan	-	Progress made on a variety of IDP projects - See table 54 for full details	Yes	-
Developer contributions collected	Policy IN10.3	No specific target set	£2,786,962 (CIL) £1,971,918 (s106)	£2,592,831 (CIL) £475,166 (s106)	-	↓
% of new housing within 400m of a bus stop/railway station	Policy ST11.1	No specific target set	Bus stop – 88%	Bus stop - 99%	-	↑
			Railway station -12%	Railway station - 3%		↓
% of developments granted with policy compliant cycle parking provision	Policy ST11.4	100%	<i>No data available</i>	96%	No	-
% of people walking and cycling for their main mode of transport	Policy ST11.4	Improvement on baseline levels	<i>No new data</i>	<i>No new data</i>	-	-
			<i>No new data</i>	<i>No new data</i>		

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Monitoring Indicator	Watford Local Plan policy	Policy target	Previous Monitoring Year (MY)	Current MY	Target met in current MY?	Compared to previous MY
% of electric vehicles within the Boroughs total car ownership	Policy ST11.5	Improvement on baseline levels	2,204 additional ULEV registrations	4,619 additional ULEV registrations	Yes	↑
Number of electric vehicle spaces delivered	Policy ST11.5	No specific target set	2,140 spaces provided	459 spaces provided	-	↓
Level of car ownership in the Borough	Policy ST11.5	Improvement on baseline levels	30,744 (2021 census)	<i>No new data</i>	-	-
% of new developments which have an active travel plan	Policy ST11.6	Improvement on baseline levels	<i>No data available</i>	100% of major applications granted	-	-
Number of qualifying schemes with a Health Impact Assessment completed	Policy HC12.2	All schemes over 100 dwellings	<i>No data available</i>	4	-	-
Number of new community facilities approved/completed	Policy HC12.3	No specific target set	1	1	-	No change
Number of community facilities lost over the monitoring year	Policy HC12.3	No net loss	0 losses	No net loss	Y	No change
Number of housing allocations permitted, started or completed over the monitoring year	Policy SA13.1	8,604 dwellings over the plan period	0 permitted 2 under construction 1 completed	1 permitted 2 under construction 1 completed	-	↑
Number of mixed-use allocations permitted, started or completed over the monitoring year	Policy SA13.1	8,604 dwellings over the plan period	1 permitted 2 under construction	2 permitted 3 under construction	-	↑
Number of employment allocations permitted, started or completed over the monitoring year	Policy SA13.1	12,799sqm of industrial floorspace over the plan period. 19,428sqm of office floorspace over the plan period	0 permitted 2 under construction	1 permitted 1 under construction 1 completed	-	↑
Number of education site allocations permitted, started or completed over the monitoring year	Policy SA13.1	No specific target	0 permitted	0 permitted	-	No change

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1. Introduction

Section 113 of the Localism Act (2011) requires every Local Planning Authority (LPA) to publish monitoring information at least annually¹. In the past Watford has complied with this requirement by producing an Authority Monitoring Report (AMR).

The structure and content of an AMR is not fully prescribed in legislation, and it is largely up to each LPA to decide what is included. The report must however be consistent with regulation 34 of the Town and Country Planning (Local Development) (England) Regulations 2012.

This sets out the following minimum requirements for what monitoring information must be published by LPAs:

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

This AMR is monitoring performance against the policies in the new Watford Local Plan 2021 – 2038 which was adopted in October 2022. Monitoring of the adopted Plan started in the 2021-2022 monitoring year to ensure that the monitoring of the Plan reflected the start of the plan period being 2021. This report is therefore the third AMR that reports on progress made against policies in the Watford Local Plan.

The Borough's development plan consists of:

- Watford Local Plan 2021-2038
- The Waste Core Strategy and Development Management policies 2011-2026 within the Minerals and Waste Local Plan, prepared by Hertfordshire County Council.

It is these documents which are used, alongside any relevant supplementary documents, and any other material considerations, to determine planning applications in the Borough.

The Local Plan incorporates the following key objectives for future growth in the Borough within its overarching vision:

- Watford will be an exemplar town that embraces sustainability and the challenges of climate change.
- Achieve a high quality of design on new developments and ensure that they are accessible and inclusive.
- Conserve and enhance green and blue infrastructure, maximising biodiversity.
- The town centre will retain its role as a retail destination in the sub-region.
- Watford will have a comprehensive network of cycling and walking routes, plus public transport will be enhanced to encourage a move away from car usage.
- Protect and enhance Watford's social, cultural, built environment and heritage.
- Support the local economy through creating business opportunities and providing a mix of employment spaces to support growth.
- Support growth with high quality infrastructure.

¹ [Plan-making - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/plan-making)- Paragraph: 073 Reference ID: 61-073-20190315

The above vision has been reflected in the Plan's policies and monitoring these policies will help the Council to reflect on the extent to which this vision is being realised and whether further interventions such as revised or new policies are needed in the future. The data reported in the AMR will be used in considering the need for a partial or full review of the Plan.

As was the case in previous AMRs, this document goes significantly beyond the minimum requirements of regulation 34 and monitors a wide variety of indicators across economic, social and environmental topics.

The Local Plan includes a monitoring framework (Appendix A) which sets out what indicators will be monitored, how it will be monitored and what targets the Council is seeking to achieve over the Plan period. Some of these targets are more prescriptive than others, and some indicators do not have a specific target where applying one would not be appropriate.

This report covers the period **1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024**.

An important part of ensuring that the AMR is useful in considering the impacts of the Local Plan policies is monitoring trends by comparing results over several years. This report compares the last two years of data to this year. However, it is clear that trends and impacts of new plan policies may take several years to emerge fully, and it is likely that results may fluctuate early in the plan period.

It should also be noted that the many of applications referenced in this report and contributing to the data that has been recorded, were approved prior to the adoption of the new Watford Local Plan and therefore, the policies within it being given full weight in decision making.

Please note that every effort has been made to ensure the accuracy of the data provided. In the event of any honest errors noticed please also send these to strategy@watford.gov.uk.

The Council welcomes views on the new Authority Monitoring Report's format and content so improvements to future reports can be made. If there are any comments, then please send these to strategy@watford.gov.uk.

Why do we have an AMR?

Councils have a duty to monitor the effectiveness of their planning policies. The AMR is not intended as a state of the Council report and should not be read as such, it is instead an important evidence base that will help to inform Council and planning decisions across the Plan period. It will also inform any future review of the Local Plan. It is likely that actual progress and trends on some of the new policy requirements may take some years to emerge fully which will be important to recognise when considering the effectiveness of policies in the Plan.

The AMR allows the Council to;

- Establish what new development and change has occurred in the Borough and monitor trends.
- Consider the extent to which Local Plan policies are effective and successful (or where there may be problems).
- Decide whether changes to policies or targets are necessary and whether these are significant enough to prompt a full or partial review of the Local Plan.

How to use this document

The AMR is structured roughly in plan order and divided into chapters that broadly reflect sections in the new Local Plan. The majority of indicators correspond directly to a row in the Watford Local Plan monitoring framework.

An executive summary is provided at the start of the document setting out the annual results and giving a basic indication of whether targets are being met, and whether the trend is up, down or unchanged from the previous year.

It is expected that the AMRs in this early phase of the Plan period will be fairly transitional as applications approved against superseded policies get delivered and replaced by applications approved against the new Local Plan policies.

The majority of indicators are reported in tables that will provide data from 2021/2022 to 2025/2026. This will enable comparisons to be clearly shown and enable more streamlined updating of the indicators in future years. After 2025/2026, a column titled 'Pre-2026' will be added to include the cumulative total of completions prior to this date. This will keep the table legible and compact.

For most indicators three analysis boxes are provided, one describing what has happened over the monitoring year, one to analyse comparisons and trends with previous years and finally a section which will explain the impacts of the years data on the Local Plan and the effectiveness of the Plan's policies.

The following sub sections summarise the different sections of this AMR and the key indicators that are to be monitored.

A Spatial Strategy for Watford

This section of the Plan sets out the overall strategy for growth in the Borough including the number of residential dwellings, and level of employment floorspace that is required to meet local needs and broadly where this growth will be located within the Borough.

This AMR reports the number of residential completions over the monitoring year, and the net gain/loss of employment floorspace and will offer comparisons with identified needs in the Borough.

The Core Development Area

The vast majority of development in the Borough is to be directed towards three Strategic Development Areas as the most sustainable locations for growth.

- The Watford Gateway Strategic Development Area;
- The Town Centre Strategic Development Area; and
- The Colne Valley Strategic Development Area.

This area is known collectively as the Core Development Area (CDA). 80% of all residential and mixed-use allocations in the Plan are situated within the CDA.

This AMR will report the number of residential completions taking place within and outside the Core Development Area and within each of the three Strategic Development Areas individually. This will help to show where new development in the Borough is being concentrated.

Homes for a Growing Community

The Local Plan aims to provide the housing that the community needs and ensure that these homes are well designed, high quality and that they meet building standards.

This AMR will report on the delivery of market housing, specialist housing, including affordable housing, and the quality of new residential development relative to required access and space standards.

A Strong Economy

The Local Plan aims to support the delivery of new, and the protection of existing, office and industrial employment floorspace. Clarendon Road, along with the town centre, will be the focus for new E(g)(i) office uses; whilst there are several designated industrial areas that will be the focus for the majority of industrial E(g)(iii)/B2/B8 floorspace.

This AMR will report on the delivery of both industrial and office uses, both within designated employment areas and outside.

A Vibrant Town

The policies in the Plan seek to support the Town Centre, District Centre and Local Centres in challenging economic times following the Covid-19 pandemic by protecting their long-term vitality and viability. Policies provide flexibility to encourage a mix of uses within the town centre whilst ensuring that it remains a focus for main town centre uses as defined in the NPPF.

This AMR will report on the net delivery of retail and main town centre uses floorspace over the monitoring year and will report the results of a survey conducted by the Planning Policy Team to determine the proportion of the centres that are in an active town centre uses and the proportion of units that are currently vacant.

These indicators will allow assessment of the health of the Centres and changing demands as peoples shopping habits change.

An Attractive Town

Achieving a high quality of design is a key objective for the Borough and the policies in the Plan require applicants to demonstrate how they have designed schemes in a way that reflects the character of the area, the National Planning Policy Framework, the National Design Guide and any Supplementary Planning Documents.

The Plan also includes a policy on building heights which is a locally important issue, setting base building heights for each part of the Borough as well as a detailed set of criteria that a proposal must adhere to in order for it to be acceptable.

This AMR will report; the number of planning applications where poor design has been listed as a reason for refusal, and the number of applications approved that exceed the base building heights, and conversely the number of applications where the building heights policy, Policy QD6.5 has been listed as a reason for refusal.

The Historic Environment

Policies in the Plan seek to preserve and enhance both nationally and locally designated heritage assets and conservation areas, ensuring that new development compliments the Boroughs historic environment.

This AMR will report on the number of buildings in Watford that are considered to be 'at risk' both on the Historic England 'heritage at risk' register which is released annually, and the Council's own list. The report will also monitor the number of applications which were granted contrary to advice from Historic England, and any works or changes to listed buildings that have taken place over the monitoring year.

A Climate Emergency

Policies in the Plan aim to move the Borough towards a more carbon neutral future and ensure that the Borough adapts to and mitigates the effects of climate change, reflecting the Council's declaration of a Climate Emergency in 2019. Policies also seek to ensure that development does not have an unacceptable impact on a variety of pollution related issues such as noise, odour, air quality or light pollution

This AMR will monitor progress in reducing carbon emissions, pollution, and improving air quality across the Borough. It will also monitor the proportion of new developments that meet sustainability standards regarding BREEAM, water and energy efficiency.

Conserving and Enhancing the Environment

The Local Plan seeks to protect, enhance and increase biodiversity, and access to open space and green and blue infrastructure. The Plan recognises the importance of these spaces to the local community and their role in helping to mitigate the impacts of climate change.

This section of the AMR will report on the number of applications that have been approved contrary to advice from the Environment Agency, the net gain/loss of open space and green infrastructure and the proportion of approved planning applications that have resulted in a net gain in biodiversity.

Infrastructure

The full infrastructure requirements for the Plan are set out in an Infrastructure Delivery Plan (IDP) which was submitted as part of the Local Plan evidence base and remains a live document that will be updated over the plan period. Much of the funding for this infrastructure will be sought from developer contributions as part of new development.

This AMR will therefore report on progress with the delivery of infrastructure in the IDP, and on the receipt and spending of developer contributions in the Borough.

A Sustainable Travel Town

The Local Plan seeks to achieve a modal shift over the plan period, away from private cars towards more active travel and better, more convenient and accessible, public transport.

There are a variety of indicators relating to this objective within this AMR, including the proportion of new developments that are located within 400m of a bus stop and railway station, and the proportion of new developments that include policy compliant car and cycle parking provision.

There is also an indicator relating to the provision of electric vehicle charging points and the level of electronic vehicle ownership compared to diesel or petrol vehicles.

There is also a broader indicator relating to the percentage of residents that walk or cycle as their main method of transport.

A Healthy Community

The Plan has a chapter on health, reflecting the importance of getting people to be more active by walking and cycling more through the improved provision of cycle ways and greenspaces, healthy eating, tackling noise and air pollution and providing for a healthy older population and protecting and supporting community facilities.

This AMR will report on the number of approved planning applications that include a Health Impact Assessment (HIA), and the net delivery of new community facilities.

Site Allocations and new development

There are four types of site allocation in the Plan, 33 are purely residential (28 of them are under 1 ha in size), alongside 23 mixed-use allocations which together provide for 8,604 residential units alongside a variety of other uses including employment, education or retail.

There are employment allocations for office and industrial floorspace.

There is one Gypsy and Traveller allocation for two pitches.

There are two sites allocated for education facility development over the plan period.

All allocated sites have development considerations which are used to highlight the specific requirements of development proposals and any potential issues or special considerations that need to be taken into account in delivering them.

The AMR will report generally on housing and employment delivery across the Borough, but it will also specifically report updates on allocated sites.

Duty to Co-operate

The Duty to Co-operate is a statutory duty that all LPAs must adhere to, requiring co-operation (though not necessarily agreement), on cross boundary issues that arise between neighbouring plan making authorities, and other statutory bodies, when developing strategic policies.

During the preparation of their respective Local Plans, Dacorum Borough Council, Hertsmere Borough Council, St Albans City and District Council, Three Rivers District Council, Hertfordshire County Council and Watford Borough Council have been working collaboratively to identify and consider how to appropriately address cross boundary issues where they exist.

These six Councils have also been working together on producing the South West Herts Joint Strategic Plan (JSP), which was subject to an initial vision consultation during the 2022-2023 monitoring year. Over the 23/24 monitoring year, work has focused on developing spatial options for the JSP which will form the basis for a further Regulation 18 consultation in 2025.

Before submission of the Local Plan in 2021, Watford Borough Council signed Statements of Common Ground with all of these Councils. Following the adoption of Watford's Local Plan, further cross boundary work and discussions will be ongoing as these Council's progress their own Local Plans, and with the County Council on the production of the Local Transport Plan. A number of shared evidence base documents have been developed over the monitoring year on a South West Hertfordshire wide basis, including a revised South West Hertfordshire Local Housing Needs Assessment and Economic Study. These will support both district local plans and the JSP.

At the Hertfordshire County wide level, Watford has played an active role in the Hertfordshire Infrastructure and Planning Partnership, Hertfordshire Nature Recovery Partnership, the Hertfordshire Planning Group and the Hertfordshire Development Plans Group. The work of these groups is helping to progress a number of joined up strategies on infrastructure needs, development viability and agreeing future joint working arrangements.

There were no Duty to Co-operate issues raised by the Planning Inspector or any other stakeholder during the examination of the Local Plan, nor during the subsequent consultation on main modifications, adoption or legal challenge period. Watford have also raised no DTC issues in relation to any other South West Hertfordshire Local Plan to date. This reflects and endorses the collaborative approach taken to cross boundary issues in Watford, and the positive engagement that was undertaken at all stages of the Local Plan process.

Over the monitoring year, a variety of Duty to Co-operate meetings were attended by officers in the Planning Policy team. These included meetings with neighbouring Councils in South West Hertfordshire in relation to Local Plan progress.

This section of the AMR will continue to record any key Duty to Co-operate issues that have arisen over each monitoring year.

Local Development Scheme

The timetable setting out the programme for production of Local Plan Documents is known as the Local Development Scheme (LDS). AMRs are required to set out the latest progress with preparing local plan documents during the monitoring year to meet targets set in the LDS, and whether changes to the LDS are required.

Following the adoption of the Local Plan there is currently no new LDS or any timetable in place to undertake a review. Once a decision is formally made to review the Local Plan, a new LDS will be published in this section of future AMRs.

Watford Local Plan 2021-2038

The Watford Local Plan 2021-2038 was adopted at the Full Council meeting on 17th October 2022. Paragraph 33 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) requires that local plans are reviewed every five years (from the date of local plan adoption) to consider whether they need updating. Any review will take into account changing circumstances affecting the area and any changes in national policy guidance.

Supplementary Planning Guidance

Following the adoption of the Local Plan, the Council is preparing some additional guidance to support the policies in the Plan. These are expected to generally take the form of Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs) to ensure they have sufficient weight in decision making.

Over the plan period this section will provide written updates on progress with these guidance documents and any other supplementary planning guidance that is being produced.

Table 1: Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs) being prepared by the Council

Name of document	Progress over the monitoring year
Affordable Housing SPD	Further development work and drafting has been undertaken over this monitoring year. Consultation is expected over the next monitoring year.
Co-Living SPD	Development work and drafting has been undertaken over this monitoring year. Consultation is expected over the next monitoring year.
Colne Valley Strategic Development Area SPD	The Council committed to doing an SPD during the Local Plan hearing sessions. Initial internal discussions are taking place.
Design SPD	Scoping has been undertaken by a project team. Progress towards consultation is likely to be made over the next monitoring year.

Neighbourhood Plans and Neighbourhood/Local Development Orders

The Borough currently has no Neighbourhood Plans in place, or in production. There are no Neighbourhood Plan groups currently active. This section will record any changes to this situation over the plan period.

2. Housing

Plan Period and Housing Targets

The Watford Local Plan sets a minimum target of 13,328 homes to be delivered over the plan period between 2021 and 2038, an average rate of 784 dwellings per annum. This target reflects the Government's standard methodology figure² for calculating local authority housing needs in Watford.

The Plan makes provision for this scale of growth through a combination of residential and mixed-use site allocations, windfall completions and the implementation of current extant commitments.

Figure 3.1 of the Local Plan (replicated below in Figure 1) shows the breakdown of how the housing target will be met in the Borough over the Plan period.

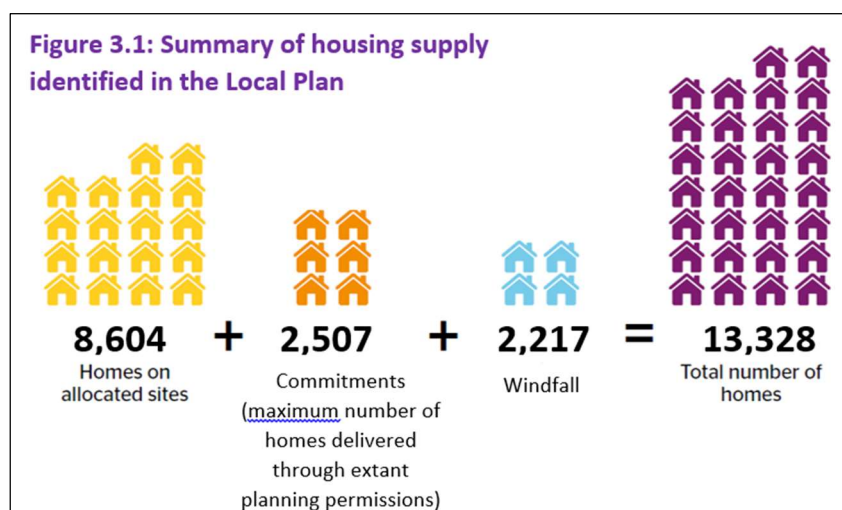


Figure 1- Housing supply identified in the Watford Local Plan- 2021-2038

Housing Trajectory

The housing trajectory assesses actual net annual completions in the past and projected numbers of completions in the future compared to the Plan's target for new housing growth.

The main purpose of the trajectory is to support forward planning by monitoring housing performance and supply to determine if any action is necessary or whether any amendments to planning policy are required to meet targets.

The table below shows residential delivery over the plan period to date. For some additional context, prior to the new Plan period starting, between 2015-2016 and 2020-2021 there was an average of 312 residential completions per annum with a maximum annual delivery of 416 dwellings which was recorded in 2020/2021. This provides useful historic context when looking at the following table. More detail on past housing completions can be found in previously published AMRs on the Councils website.

² At the time of Local Plan adoption

Table 2 sets out the gross and net residential completions recorded over the monitoring year and plan period so far.

Table 2: Residential completions over the monitoring year (MY) (dwellings) and plan period to date

	2021/2022	2022/2023	2023/2024	2024/2025	2025/2026	Total
Gross residential completions MY	812	787	768			2,367
Net residential completions MY	754	778	751			2,283

What Happened?:

In total there were 751 net residential completions over the monitoring year April 1st 2023 to March 31st 2024. This represents a minor shortfall on the Local Plan annual housing target of 784 dwellings.

It takes the total number of dwellings completed over the plan period to 2,283 (Net).

Over the year, there was significant delivery on the following large sites:

- 232 completions at 45-69 Sydney Road (20/00249/VAR)
- 145 completions at Ex-Mothercare site, 1 Cherry Tree Road (20/00803/OPD & 21/00455/AAPA)
- 108 completions at Riverwell Development (19/01342/VARM)
- 83 completions at Former Bus Garage, Marchwood House, 934-974 St Albans Road (21/00698/FULM)

Comparisons:

The figure of 751 represents a slight decrease in housing delivery from the previous year. However, the last three years since the start of the plan period have seen significantly higher delivery than the average between 2015-16 and 2020-21 and this remains the case in 2023/2024.

Implications of the Local Plan:

Whilst there is a slight decrease on last year's completions, the delivery of 751 net additional dwellings represents a substantial increase in the delivery of new dwellings relative to historic trends.

Previous AMRs predicted that delivery rates will stabilise as the plan period progresses. It is positive to see delivery broadly in line with the annual need requirement at this early stage of the plan period, reflecting the positive approach to development in the Borough. The Local Plan should ensure that this growth is well designed and sustainably located.

687 of these residential completions were on major applications (defined as applications of 10 or more dwellings), whilst 441 completions were on developments of 100 units or more.

These types of large developments tend to contribute towards a peak and trough style of housing delivery due to them delivering large numbers of dwellings in one year and low numbers in other years. It is likely that delivery will become more consistent once the mainly small to medium sized site allocations start to come forward.

Housing Delivery Test

The Housing Delivery Test was introduced by the Government in 2018 to monitor how effectively new homes are being delivered within local authorities over a three-year period. The test is based on comparing the standard methodology produced by Government against the actual number of homes delivered over a rolling three-year period.

The following table shows the latest Housing Delivery Test (HDT) result in Watford for the period up to 2022.

It is clear from the reported delivery in table 2, that the Councils position in relation to the Housing Delivery Test will have changed since the Government’s previously released results.

Table 3: Housing Delivery Test results (dwellings)

Number of homes required			Total number of homes required	Number of homes delivered			Total number of homes delivered	Housing Delivery Test: 2022 measurement	Housing Delivery Test: 2022 consequence
2019-20	2020-21	2021-22		2019-20	2020-21	2021-22			
726	524	784	2,034	266	440	780	1,486	73%	Presumption

As a result of the above, the Council is subject to all of the following:

- Less than 95%- An action plan must be produced within six months.
- Less than 85%- A 20% buffer must be added to the five-year housing land supply
- Less than 75%- The ‘presumption in favour of sustainable development’ applies. This introduces a test, which has become known in legal cases as the ‘tilted balance’ in favour of granting permission for housing development. This means that local development plan policies carry less weight, and increased emphasis should be placed on the NPPF in decision making.

At the time of writing this report, there has not been any updated HDT results since the 2022 results that were published in December 2023. The NPPF, also published in December 2023, amended the sanction requirements for authorities with a recently adopted Local Plan.

There has been no change to the published HDT results since the previous 2022 results were published. Given the significantly increased housing delivery in the past two years, it is expected that the ‘presumption in favour of sustainable development’ will no longer apply. These results will be published by the Council once available.

Five Year Housing Supply

Paragraph 76 of the NPPF published in December 2023 states that Local Planning Authorities are not required to identify and update annually a supply of specific deliverable sites sufficient to provide a minimum of five years' worth of housing for decision making purposes if the following criteria are met:

- a) their adopted plan is less than 5 years old; and
- b) that adopted plan identified at least a 5-year supply of specific, deliverable sites at the time that its examination concluded.

The Watford Local Plan was adopted in October 2022 and as such is less than 5 years old. During the Plan's Examination, the Inspector considered whether it identified a 5-year supply of specific, deliverable sites and concluded in paragraphs 96-99 of the Inspectors Report that a five-year supply of land was identified on adoption and in subsequent years.

Criteria a and b of paragraph 76 of the 2023 NPPF therefore both apply and so there is no requirement for the local authority to annually update their 5-year housing land supply position as agreed at the Local Plan examination. The agreed position at the Examination therefore remains the latest position with regard to housing land supply in the Borough.

Note that following the change in Government in May 2024, a consultation was undertaken on a revised NPPF which reversed the above. If published, it would reinstate the requirement for local authorities to undertake an annual assessment of five-year housing supply regardless of Local Plan status. At the time of writing this report, the consultation NPPF has not been formally published and so it is unclear whether these changes will be made.

2023-2024 Housing Completions

This section breaks down the current monitoring years residential completions by location and type.

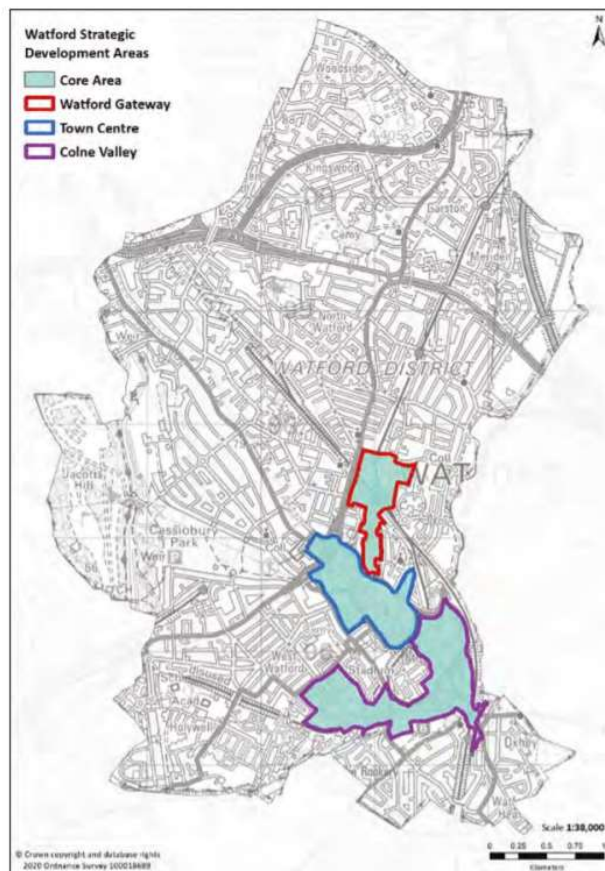


Figure 2- Core Development Area and Strategic Development Areas

The Core Development Area (CDA) includes the areas covered by the three Strategic Development Areas (SDAs); the Town Centre SDA, Colne Valley SDA and Watford Gateway SDA. Figure 2 shows the geographic extent of the CDA and each of the SDAs.

80% of dwellings proposed on site allocations in the Local Plan are located within the CDA and it is expected that a significant percentage of all completions over the plan period will be located within this area.

Tables 4 and 5 below, break down annual residential completions into those within the CDA as a whole and then into each of the three SDAs.

Table 4: Net residential completions within the Core Development Area (dwellings)

		2021/2022	2022/2023	2023/2024	2024/2025	2025/2026	Total
Net residential completions within CDA	No.	368	352	136			856
	%	49%	45%	18%			37%
Net residential completions outside CDA	No.	386	426	615			1,427
	%	51%	55%	82%			63%

Table 5: Residential completions by Strategic Development Area (dwellings)

		2021/2022	2022/2023	2023/2024	2024/2025	2025/2026	Total
Net residential completions within Watford Gateway SDA	No.	171	9	0			180
	% of total HC's	23%	1%	0%			8%
Net residential completions within the Town Centre SDA	No.	104	55	-6			153
	% of total HC's	14%	7%	-1%			7%
Net residential completions within the Colne Valley SDA	No.	93	288	142			523
	% of total HC's	12%	37%	19%			23%

What Happened?:

In the current monitoring year there were 136 net residential completions within the CDA out of a total of 751 net completions. This equates to 18% of all completions.

Similarly to the last monitoring year, the Colne Valley SDA saw the highest number of residential completions over the monitoring year (108 dwellings- 14% of all completions). These were all delivered on two phases of the 'Riverwell' development.

There was a net loss of -6 residential completions within the Town Centre SDA. This is due to a conversion of 5 flats into offices.

There were no completions within the Watford Gateway SDA.

Comparisons:

There is a significant contrast between 2022-23 and 2023-24 for this indicator, with the overall delivery within the CDA 27% lower. However, there were similar trends with considerably more delivery in the Colne Valley SDA than other SDAs.

It is predicted that there will be more completions in the CDA in future monitoring years. There are currently 1,407 dwellings committed in Watford Gateway and 215 dwellings committed within the Town Centre.

This indicator will likely be subject to annual fluctuations based on the delivery on one specific large site however the trends will be analysed over the coming years to review levels of delivery in each part of the CDA.

Overall, there was a variation in the overall proportion of completions inside and outside the CDA. This monitoring year saw 82% of total completions occurring outside the CDA. This is due to a significant number of completions on Sydney Road, Garston Bus Garage St Albans Road and the conversion of the Ex-Mothercare Headquarters from offices to residential use.

Implications for the Local Plan:

The Plan directs the majority of growth to the Core Development Area reflecting the areas sustainability in terms of access to services, facilities and public transport and therefore its suitability in principle for development.

80% of all residential and mixed-use site allocations are within the CDA and so it is likely that delivery in this area will increase, and that the proportion of delivery relative to outside the CDA will also increase as these site allocations come forward.

The CDA designation was only confirmed through the Local Plan adoption and so it hard to make any long-term conclusions on its effectiveness as a designation at this early stage of the Plan period. It would be expected that the proportion of delivery in the CDA may increase as site allocations in the Local Plan start to come forward.

Residential Completions on Previously Developed Land (PDL)

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and the Local Plan seek to make effective use of land by optimising densities and prioritising the re-use of brownfield sites (Previously Developed Land). There is a target in the monitoring framework for 80% of all residential development to be on Previously Developed Land (PDL).

The proportion of completions on PDL has historically been high in Watford, 84% on average over the five years prior to the start of the plan period (2015-2020) and it is expected that this trend will continue given the geography of the Borough and the focus in the Local Plan on delivering growth on brownfield sites.

Table 6: Residential completions on Previously Developed Land (Gross) (dwellings)

		2021/2022	2022/2023	2023/2024	2024/2025	2025/2026	Total
Residential completions on PDL (gross)	No.	767	735	758			1,502
	%	95%	93%	99%			96%

What Happened?:

In 2023/2024 there were 758 gross completions on PDL out of a total of 787 gross completions. This equates to 99% of all gross completions being on PDL meaning that the 80% target in the Local Plan has been exceeded.

Comparisons:

Historically Watford has seen a very high proportion of development on PDL, and this trend has clearly continued this year, as it did last year where 93% of all delivery was on PDL.

Implications for the Local Plan:

The Local Plan, and the NPPF, supports a 'brownfield first' approach to the delivery of housing, with only one site allocation being on a 'greenfield site'. As such it is expected that the majority of development will continue to take place on Previously Developed Land.

This year's figure of 99% means that the Borough has substantially exceeded the Local Plan target of 80% which is positive.

Extant Permissions

Table 7 records the number of dwellings that have been granted planning permission over the monitoring year and the number of total extant permissions in the Borough at the end of the monitoring year.

The number of dwellings being granted permission will have a direct impact on the level of housing development coming forward in future years and so it is a useful indicator to monitor.

Table 7: Number of dwellings granted permission over the monitoring year (MY) (dwellings)

	2021/2022	2022/2023	2023/2024	2024/2025	2025/2026	Total
Number of dwellings granted planning permission over the MY	991	838	859			2,688
Number of dwellings on extant permissions at the end of the MY	4,202	3,569	3,295			N/A

What Happened?:

Over the monitoring year 859 dwellings were granted planning permission, this takes the total of dwellings granted over the plan period to 2,688 dwellings.

As of 31st March 2024, there were 3,295 dwellings in total with extant planning permission. This should provide a considerable supply of new homes over the coming years, even considering the fact that a proportion of these extant permissions will inevitably lapse without being implemented.

Comparisons:

Compared to the 2022/2023 monitoring year, there was a slight increase in dwellings granted permission but a slight reduction in total extant permissions.

Despite this, there remains a significant extant supply and number of dwellings being granted planning permission.

Implications for the Local Plan:

There are a considerable number of extant housing permissions in the Borough. It is likely that these permissions will provide the bulk of housing delivery in the short term and will contribute towards meeting the annual Local Plan housing requirement of 784 dwellings.

Lapse Rate

It is a reasonable assumption that not all planning applications granted permission will end up being implemented. To ensure that the published housing supply in the Borough is robust, an allowance should be made for the non-implementation of some permissions.

This allowance is known as a Lapse Rate. The Lapse Rate is calculated by determining the percentage of all dwellings on extant permissions which have lapsed over a given period compared against the annual number of residential units granted permission over the same given period.

It was determined during the Local Plan examination that a 15% lapse rate was appropriate and reflective of past trends in the Borough.

Table 8 below reports the number of lapsed permissions over the monitoring year, compared against the 15% figure over the plan period.

Table 8: Lapse Rate over the monitoring year and plan period (dwellings)

	2021/2022	2022/2023	2023/2024	2024/2025	2025/2026	Total
Number of dwellings granted permission	991	838	859			2,693
Number of dwellings lapsed	62	32	28			122
Lapse Rate	6%	4%	3%			7%

Table 9 below further breaks down this Lapse Rate data into major developments (10 or more dwellings) and minor developments (under 10 dwellings). Over the course of the plan period this will highlight whether non implemented permissions are evenly distributed between major and minor applications. This will provide additional and useful data when it comes to reviewing the local plan policies and the Borough's five-year supply assumptions.

Table 9: Lapse Rate on major and minor developments (dwellings)

	2021/2022	2022/2023	2023/2024	2024/2025	2025/2026	Total
Number of dwellings granted permission on sites of 10 or more dwellings	863	768	789			2,420
Number of dwellings lapsed on sites of 10 or more dwellings	39	0	0			39
Lapse rate on sites of 10 or more dwellings	5%	0%	0%			1.7%
Number of dwellings granted permission on sites of less than 10 dwellings	128	70	70			268
Number of dwellings lapsed on sites of less than 10 dwellings	23	32	28			83
Lapse rate on sites of less than 10 dwellings	18%	46%	40%			35%

What Happened?:

Table 8 demonstrates that over the monitoring year, 28 dwellings previously granted planning permission were on applications that lapsed between April and March 2023-2024. This is a lapse rate over the year of 3%.

Table 9 analyses whether this lapse rate has been consistent across all types of application or whether it is more prevalent in major or minor applications. Over this monitoring year, there were no lapses on major applications (10 or more dwellings), compared to a lapse rate of 40% on minor applications of less than 10 dwellings.

This difference between minor and major permissions has been clear in each year of the plan period so far and so is likely a pattern that will continue.

Comparisons:

There was an assumed lapse rate of 15% provided at the examination of the Watford Local Plan based on historic trends. The overall lapse rate this year was considerably less than this figure, although the lapse rate on minor applications was higher.

The 40% lapse rate on minor applications is mainly a reflection of the lower number of dwellings granted on minor applications this year compared to last. It will be interesting to see how this percentage develops over the plan period.

Implications for the Local Plan:

It is positive to see a lower than average total lapse rate over the monitoring year demonstrating the strong market conditions that exist in the Borough which allow the vast majority of permissions, particularly major permissions, to be implemented.

There was, however, a high lapse rate on minor applications over the monitoring year and it will be important to consider over the coming years whether it is an anomaly or part of a broader economic and market trend that means permissions are not getting implemented.

Ultimately the Council has limited control over Lapse Rates. It cannot force developers to implement permissions and so there is limited potential for a policy approach being able to resolve any identified issue.

Density of Residential Completions

The new Watford Local Plan sets minimum targets with regard to the density of new residential development within and outside the Core Development Area (CDA):

- Within the CDA new residential developments should be a minimum of 95 dwellings per hectare (dph).
- Outside the CDA new residential developments should be a minimum of 45 dwellings per hectare.

This indicator will highlight how the density of new development is changing across the area, as a reflection of the increased demand for new homes, and the effectiveness of the Local Plan policies to distinguish between applications within the CDA and outside the CDA.

Table 10: Average density of residential development (dwellings per hectare)

	2021/2022	2022/2023	2023/2024	2024/2025	2025/2026	Total
Average density of residential completions within CDA	177dph	241dph	143dph			187dph
Average density of residential completions outside CDA	95dph	82dph	84dph			87dph
Overall average density of residential completions	116dph	122dph	88dph			109dph

What Happened?:

Over the monitoring year the average density of new residential development completed within the CDA was 143dph compared to outside the CDA where the density was 84dph on average.

Across the whole Borough the average density was 88dph.

The minimum density standards above have been exceeded both within the CDA and outside, and the density of new development is considerably higher within the CDA than outside it.

Comparisons:

Prior to this Local Plan period, densities for new residential development had been averaging under 100dph. The density of new development in the Borough is increasing on average and the new minimum density figures in the Local Plan reflect a desire to optimise densities and make more efficient use of available land.

Compared to the last monitoring year, the density of new development within the CDA has decreased from 241dph to 143dph and is now 187dph for the plan period. This decrease is due to there being a higher number of completions within the CDA that were not flatted dwellings. Outside the CDA however, average densities slightly increased from 82dph to 84dph due to office to residential conversions.

Implications for the Local Plan:

The Local Plan seeks to optimise densities and make more efficient use of land by setting minimum density standards for within the CDA and outside the CDA. Over the first three years of the plan period these densities have been exceeded. It will be important to monitor this indicator to get an idea of the density of new development being approved in the Borough relative to these minimum densities and compared to historic density rates in the Borough.

[Delivery of Site Allocations](#)

Chapter 13 of the Local Plan allocates a range of sites for housing and other mixed-uses. Details of any progress that has taken place on these allocations over the monitoring year can be found in section 12 of this AMR.

[Type of Dwellings](#)

Previous AMRs have reported that the vast majority of new residential dwellings in Watford are 1 or two bedroom flats. The 2021-2022 AMR indicated that the number of dwellings that were 3+ bedrooms was just 10%, whilst in 2022-2023 this figure was just 6%. This is a further reduction to the previous five-year trend which showed 12.6% of dwellings being 3+ bedrooms.

The Local Plan evidence base (South West Hertfordshire Local Housing Needs Assessment, 2020), indicated however, that there is a need in Watford for:

- 68% of market homes to be 3+ bedrooms
- 38% of affordable homes to be 3+ bedrooms.

It was clear however that were the Local Plan to require this mix it would not be able to meet its quantitative housing needs relative to Government targets.

The Local Plan has therefore sought to balance the delivery of local housing needs in quantitative terms, with the qualitative need to deliver larger family sized housing. Policy H03.2 requires new residential development to provide at least 20% family sized dwellings (3+ bed properties). Tables 11 and 12 show the breakdown of type and size of dwelling in the Borough over the monitoring year and the percentage of all completions in terms of dwelling size and type.

Table 11: Type of dwellings being completed over the monitoring year (gross) (dwellings)

		2021/2022	2022/2023	2023/2024	2024/2025	2025/2026	Total
Flats, Apartment or Maisonette	No.	728	745	686			2,159
	%	90%	95%	89%			91%
Bungalow	No.	10	0	2			12
	%	1%	0%	<1%			<1%
House	No.	40	19	73			132
	%	5%	2%	10%			6%
Studio	No.	28	22	3			53
	%	3%	3%	<1%			2%
Other	No.	6	0	0			6
	%	<1%	0%	0%			<1%

Table 12: Size of dwelling units completed over the monitoring year (gross)

		2021/2022	2022/2023	2023/2024	2024/2025	2025/2026	Total
1 bed	No.	311	278	240			829
	%	38%	35%	31%			35%
2 bed	No.	422	460	396			1,278
	%	52%	58%	52%			54%
3 bed	No.	64	42	120			226
	%	8%	5%	16%			10%
4+ bed	No.	15	7	12			34
	%	2%	1%	2%			2%

What Happened?:

Over the monitoring year 89% of all residential completions were flats, apartments, maisonettes or studios. Houses and Bungalows made up 11% of all dwellings delivered over the year.

18% of all dwellings delivered over the monitoring year were 3+ bedrooms and therefore defined as 'family sized'. The Local Plan target for 20% of all dwellings to be family sized dwellings of 3+ bedrooms was therefore narrowly missed over this monitoring year.

Just over 50% of all dwellings completed were 2 bed units, with 31% being 1 bed.

Comparisons:

The prevalence of flatted development compared to traditional housing types is a long-term trend in the Borough. It is expected that this trend will likely continue, although it will be important to monitor the proportion of dwellings that are family sized in comparison to the target in Policy HO3.2.

The proportion of 3+ bedroom units over this monitoring year has tripled compared to last year with 18% compared to 6%. This is a particularly high proportion of family sized units compared to historic trends and is more in line with the Local Plan requirement for 20% of completions to be family sized.

Implications for the Local Plan:

The Local plan targets for family sized dwellings has been narrowly missed in this monitoring year, with 18% delivered compared to the 20% target, although this is much more aligned with the Local Plan than previous years.

The provision of family sized units is a key element of meeting the housing needs of the Borough. Historically, the vast majority of completions recorded would have been approved against old planning policies and not subject to this 20% requirement. It is promising to see that progress is being made to achieve the 20% target. It will be important to monitor this going forward to determine how effective the requirements in Policy HO3.2 have been in securing family sized homes.

Affordable Housing

The Watford Local Plan (Policy H03.3) sets a target of 35% of habitable rooms on residential developments of over 10 units to be affordable. Previously affordable housing was based on the number of units, but in the new Local Plan, the number of habitable rooms is used instead, as a way of trying to facilitate delivery of larger family sized affordable units rather than only delivering 1 or 2 bed units.

Whilst the policy is not specific on tenure mix across all the affordable housing typologies that are included within the NPPF definition, 60% of affordable dwellings should be social rent tenure.

Table 13 and 14 set out both the overall number and proportion of affordable housing delivered over the monitoring year as a percentage of total completions as well as breaking down this delivery into tenures, allowing comparison against the above local plan targets. Tables 13 and 14 consider affordable housing delivery both by number of units and by habitable room.

Table 13- Number of Affordable houses (Net) (dwellings)

	2021/2022	2022/2023	2023/2024	2024/2025	2025/2026	Total
Number of net affordable dwellings completed	251	94	265			610
% of all net completions	33%	12%	35%			27%

Table 14- Number of Affordable houses (Net) (dwellings) by habitable room

	2021/2022	2022/2023	2023/2024	2024/2025	2025/2026	Total
Number of affordable units delivered by habitable room	No data	196	444			640
% of all net completions	No data	14%	31%			23%

Table 15: Type of affordable dwellings completed over the monitoring year (gross) (dwellings)

		2021/2022	2022/2023	2023/2024	2024/2025	2025/2026	Total
Social rented	No.	30	30	23			83
	%	10%	32%	9%			17%
Affordable rented	No.	229	49	89			367
	%	75%	52%	33%			53%
Intermediate and Shared Ownership	No.	44	15	153			212
	%	15%	16%	58%			30%
Build to rent	No.	0	0	0			0
	%	0%	0%	0%			0%
Discounted Market	No.	0	0	0			0
	%	0%	0%	0%			0%

What Happened?:

Over the monitoring year 265 affordable dwellings were completed in the Borough, equal to 35% of all completions by unit, and 31% by habitable room. This met, or nearly met, the 35% target in Policy HO3.3 of the Local Plan.

Of these affordable completions, 9% were social rent compared to the local requirement of 60%, whilst 33% were affordable rented; and 58% were shared ownership or intermediate tenure. Like previous monitoring years, there were no build-to-rent or discounted market dwellings completed.

Comparisons:

This monitoring year saw the largest number of affordable dwellings built in a single year in Watford since records in the AMR began in 2014, with 265 completions. This monitoring year saw over twice as many affordable units and habitable rooms being delivered compared to the year prior.

The amount of social rent has decreased this monitoring year, with more intermediate/shared ownership compared to previous monitoring years. Whilst the amount of affordable rent has increased, the proportion has decreased.

Implications for the Local Plan:

The Watford Local Plan policy HO3.3 sets an affordable housing target by habitable room rather than by number of units.

By habitable room, affordable housing delivery this year was slightly below the Local Plan target, but considerably more than the number delivered in the previous monitoring year.

Whilst almost all of the completions this year were on applications approved prior to the Local Plan's adoption, it will be important that the Council considers the barriers to securing and delivering affordable in order to overcome them.

This indicator will continue to observe delivery of affordable housing and trends over a longer period.

Residential Conversions

Table 15 below sets out the number of residential conversions that have been permitted over the monitoring year.

Conversions and Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs) make an important contribution to an area's housing stock and as such are supported in the Local Plan where they are well located with regard to public transport and access to services and facilities, and where they would not result in unacceptable amenity impacts.

The delivery of this type of housing will need to be carefully managed and this indicator will allow the location of new HMOs to be evaluated with regard to avoiding over-concentrations of such units and their potential amenity impacts.

Table 15: Number of permissions granted for Residential conversions (applications)

	2021/2022	2022/2023	2023/2024	2024/2025	2025/2026	Total
Number of conversions from a single dwelling house into multiple smaller houses permitted	14*	2	6			8
Number of conversions of residential units into a large House in Multiple Occupation (HMO) of over 6 occupants	<i>No data available this year. Data will be reported in subsequent AMRs</i>	<i>No data available this year. Data will be reported in subsequent AMRs</i>	3			3

**This was the total number of extant permissions for residential conversions to be used as a baseline. From 2022/2023 onwards the figure represents the additional applications approved over the monitoring year.*

The table above highlights two distinct types of conversion; the sub-division of an existing residential dwelling into a larger number of smaller dwellings and secondly the number of residential dwellings that have been converted into HMOs. Note that the above indicator only includes larger HMOs of 6 occupants or more; HMOs of less than 6 occupants can be created under Permitted Development and so it is not possible to monitor these effectively.

What Happened?:

Over the monitoring year, 6 applications were granted permission for the conversion of existing residential dwelling resulting in a net gain of 12 dwellings.

3 residential units were converted into larger HMOs. These larger HMOs are located on Queens Place, Monica Close and The Coppice, all within 300m of the Core Development Area. This was the first year that data has been available for this indicator, therefore comparisons cannot be made.

Comparisons:

There was an increase between the previous monitoring year and this monitoring year in the number of applications granted for residential conversions. However, the scale of each individual residential conversion is similar.

This is the first year that HMO data has been available and so comparisons are not possible this year.

Implications for the Local Plan:

It will be important to assess the number and location of units being delivered through conversions and HMOs to ensure that they are well located and that they do not contribute to or exacerbate amenity issues.

The Local Plan supports the increase in density however the changes in housing stock must be monitored.

Specialist Housing and Care Homes

Policy HO3.5 of the Local Plan supports the provision of specialist housing to meet the needs of vulnerable people. This type of development will become increasingly important given the ageing population and the increasing number of residents with disabilities living in the Borough. This indicator will therefore monitor the delivery of this type of development across the plan period.

Table 16: Number of specialist and care home beds completed, and the number lost over the monitoring year

	2021/2022	2022/2023	2023/2024	2024/2025	2025/2026	Total
Number of specialist and care home beds completed	0	0	0			0
Number of specialist and care home beds lost	0	0	0			0

Table 17 will add further detail to the above table, reporting the number of specialist housing units completed and approved over the monitoring year, plus the location and type of these developments.

It is important given the wide variety of different specialist housing typologies to suit different levels of care and need that the type of specialist housing being delivered is monitored alongside the monitoring of overall housing.

Table 17: Location and type of specialist and care bed spaces completed and approved

Location/App number	Type of specialist housing (extra care/supported living)	Number of dwellings
Total		0

What Happened?:

Over the monitoring year, there were no gains or losses of specialist care or extra care development.

Comparisons:

There were also no gains and losses of specialist care or extra care units in the previous monitoring year.

Implications for the Local Plan:

Over the course of the plan period, it will be crucial that the needs for specialist care homes are met, especially when considering the ageing population within the Borough. This indicator will continue to report any delivery of this type and assess whether more direct interventions are necessary as part of a future plan review.

Student Accommodation

There are a variety of education institutions within and adjacent to Watford that could create a need for student accommodation in the Borough. These include West Herts College, the Harrow branch of the University of Westminster and Middlesex University in Hendon.

Whilst the Borough has no such facilities currently and at the start of the plan period there are no current permissions to deliver any student specific accommodation, this indicator will monitor any permissions or completions of this type that come forward over the plan period.

Table 18: Number of applications for student accommodation completed or approved

	2021/2022	2022/2023	2023/2024	2024/2025	2025/2026	Total
Number of student bed spaces completed	0	0	0			0
Number of student bed spaces approved	0	0	0			0

What Happened?:

Over the monitoring year there were no gains or losses of student bed spaces.

Comparisons:

There were also no gains and losses of student accommodation in the previous monitoring year.

Implications for the Local Plan:

The Local Plan provides a positive base on which proposals for student housing can be assessed. There is no identified demand currently for this type of unit and so there is no target to assess any provision against.

If the demand for this type of accommodation is shown to have increased in the Borough then this will be considered in a future iteration of the Local Plan.

Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation

Watford Borough Council currently accommodates a single 10 pitch gypsy and traveller site (which can accommodate up to 20 caravans) at Tolpits Lane in the south of the Borough. This site is managed by Hertfordshire County Council. There are currently no transit sites present in Watford.

The Local Plan allocates a site adjacent to the existing site at Tolpits Lane for the provision of two additional pitches. This meets in full the current identified need in the Borough. This need was identified in the Gypsy and Traveller assessment undertaken as part of the Local Plan evidence base.

Policy H03.8 sets out the basis by which proposals for Gypsy and Traveller accommodation will be assessed.

Table 19: Number of Gypsy and Traveller pitches completed or approved over the monitoring year

	2021/2022	2022/2023	2023/2024	2024/2025	2025/2026	Total
Number of Gypsy and Traveller pitches completed	0	0	0			0
Number of Gypsy and Traveller pitches approved	0	0	0			0

What Happened?:

Over the monitoring year there were no gains or losses of Gypsy and Traveller pitches.

Comparisons:

There were also no gains and losses of Gypsy and Traveller accommodation in the previous monitoring year.

Implications for the Local Plan:

The target for and allocation of 2 Gypsy and Traveller pitches reflects the assessed need in the latest Gypsy and Traveller Needs Assessment.

Any future Local Plan review would need to take account of an up-to-date Gypsy and Traveller Assessment. There is no indication of any demand for additional pitches over and above the need identified in the Borough at present.

Self-Build and Custom Build Housing

Section 1 of the Self Build and Custom Housebuilding Act 2015, requires local authorities to keep a register of any person seeking to acquire serviced plots in the area for self-build and custom housebuilding. Under Section 2 of the Act, they are also required to have regard to this register in developing strategies that will provide enough suitable permissions to meet this identified demand. These can be delivered as either market or affordable homes.

Table 20: Number of people seeking to acquire plots that are registered on the authorities' self-build register

Number on the register as of 31/3/2024	Number added over the monitoring year
38	2

Table 21: Delivery of Self and Custom Build Units

	2021/2022	2022/2023	2023/2024	2024/2025	2025/2026	Total
Number of Self and Custom Build plots approved	0	0	0			0
Number of CIL exemptions for self-build granted	2	5	3			10
Number of Self and Custom Build units completed	0	0	1			1

What Happened?:

There were 38 people on the self-build register as of the end of the monitoring year. People can request to be added at any time of the year and so this figure may have changed at the time of reading. This is an increase of two on the previous monitoring year.

This will likely be only an indication of demand. In reality, there may be others who have not registered that would have the means and interest in self or custom build development if opportunities were to arise. There may also be those that are on the register who desire a self-build plot but in reality would not have the means to acquire or deliver a self-build development.

Table 21 shows that over the monitoring year there were no self and custom build plots approved and there was one plot completed.

There were three CIL exemptions offered for self-build over the monitoring year.

This is the first year a self-build dwelling has been completed.

Comparisons:

In the 2022/23 monitoring year there were 13 additional requests received and added to the self-build register compared to two additions in this monitoring year.

There was one self or custom build unit delivered and there were three self-build CIL exemptions issued. This is broadly aligned with results over the plan period so far.

Implications for the Local Plan:

Given the current and expected dominance of flatted developments in the Borough, particularly within the CDA the opportunities for delivering self and custom build units in the Borough may be limited. It is therefore important that any opportunities that do arise are taken advantage of to ensure that the demand for self-build is met.

The number of additional people being entered onto the self-build register is reported to assess growing demand that the council will have an obligation to try and meet. Whilst we are unable to define any long-term trend, the number of people being added to the register is limited showing a potential lack of demand.

Building Standards

Policy H03.10 sets out four requirements relating to the quality of new residential units:

- Firstly, that all new homes will meet the nationally described space standards;
- Secondly, that all new housing will be designed to comply with M4(2) of the building regulations unless they are meeting M4(3) of the building regulations;
- Thirdly, on developments over 10 homes at least 4% of the dwellings should be wheelchair adaptable and built to M4(3) standard.
- Finally, on developments of 50 or more dwellings 2% are to be designed to support living someone living with dementia.

Meeting these standards is an important requirement for delivering high quality homes in the Borough that provide a high quality of life for residents.

Table 22- Percentage of new development meeting building standards in H03.10

		2021/2022	2022/2023	2023/2024	2024/2025	2025/2026	Total
Number and percentage of completions meeting national space standards	No.	<i>No data available this year. Data will be reported in subsequent AMRs</i>	<i>No data available this year. Data will be reported in subsequent AMRs</i>	342 dwellings granted on major applications			342
	% meeting space standard			100%			
Number and percentage of applications complying with M4(2) accessibility standard	No.	<i>No data available this year. Data will be reported in subsequent AMRs</i>	<i>No data available this year. Data will be reported in subsequent AMRs</i>	332 dwellings granted on major applications			332
	% meeting M4(2) standard			100%			
Number and percentage of applications of over 10 dwellings meeting M4(3) accessibility standard	No.	<i>No data available this year. Data will be reported in subsequent AMRs</i>	<i>No data available this year. Data will be reported in subsequent AMRs</i>	10 dwellings granted on major applications			10
	% meeting M4(3) standard			3%			
Number of dementia friendly homes delivered on sites of 50 or more dwellings	No.	<i>No data available this year. Data will be reported in subsequent AMRs</i>	<i>No data available this year. Data will be reported in subsequent AMRs</i>	0 dwellings			0

What Happened?:

Data is only available for major applications granted permission within the monitoring year.

A major development provides:

- 10 or more houses or flats or
- buildings where the floor space to be created is 1,000 square metres or greater.

Over the monitoring year, two residential major applications were granted. Both of the major residential developments granted were compliant with National Space Standards and M4(2) and thus the local plan requirement. One of the developments achieved a 4% provision of M4(3) dwellings.

Over this monitoring year, there were no dementia friendly homes granted on applications for over 50 dwellings. It should be noted that even though no completions were recorded specifically as dementia friendly homes, the adherence to M4(2) and M4(3) may contribute to making homes more dementia friendly.

Comparisons:

This is the first year that data has been available for this indicator, therefore a comparison with previous years is not possible.

Implications for the Local Plan:

It will be important to monitor this indicator in future years to allow for comparison. Whilst it does not include all new residential developments, it includes larger-scale, major developments granted.

Meeting these standards is an important requirement for delivering high quality homes in the Borough that provide a high quality of life for residents.

3. Employment and the Economy

The following indicators present a variety of data on the provision of new employment floorspace in the Borough, and the gains and losses resulting from changes of use to and from employment.

In 2020 the Use Class Order was revised nationally, resulting in a large number of uses including offices, and light industrial uses being collated into a new single commercial use class (E).

The following indicators will therefore take into account the following Use Classes as defined in the Use Class Order (2020):

B Class:

- B2 (General Industrial)- Use for industrial processes other than uses falling within Class E(g)(iii) (*previously Class B1c*).
- B8 (Storage and Distribution).

E Class:

- E(g)- Previously B1 Use Class- uses which can be carried out in a residential area without detriment to its amenity:
 - E(g)(i)- Offices to carry out any operational or administrative function
 - E(g)(ii)- Research and Development of products or processes
 - E(g)(iii)- Industrial processes

Note that some of the applications reported in this section were approved prior to 2020 so were approved against the previous Use Class Order. For the purposes of the indicators in this section, the provision of both B1a, B1c and E Class Uses have been taken into account. For ease of analysis, any B1a uses have been combined with any E(g)(i) uses; any B1b uses have been combined with E(g)(ii) uses and any B1c uses have been combined with E(g)(iii) uses. They are all referred to in this report as per the current Use Classes Order.

If an application involves a process of demolition and rebuild, these can often take place in one year and the replacement provision will not be completed until the following year (or years in the case of larger sites). This can sometimes be the cause of apparent substantial net losses in employment floorspace. It is important therefore to assess trends in this section over a period of time rather than make overall conclusions based on single monitoring year. Where it is clear that the losses are likely to be balanced by subsequent re-provision, this has been indicated in the analysis.

Permitted Development

Some changes of use involving commercial floorspace can take place through Permitted Development (PD) under the regulations of the General Permitted Development Order (GDPO, 2021). This means they do not require planning permission. As these changes take place outside the planning system they cannot be monitored and as such are not included within the following figures.

Article 4 Directions

The Council has previously had Article 4 Directions in place to try and protect designated employment areas from changes of use through Permitted Development. This reflected the importance of these areas to local employment and the lack of alternative sites available for these uses, as well as concerns over the quality of development delivered through PD.

Given the changes to the Use Class Order and the Permitted Development Order (GDPO), re-issued Article 4 Directions have been drawn up to try and protect the employment areas designated in the Local Plan.

The Directions were issued in June 2023 and were subject to consultation with landowners and occupiers during June/July. During this time, they were also considered by representatives of the Secretary of State (SoS) at DLUHC who requested additional information from the Council.

This led to a suggestion to amend the originally submitted boundary of the Direction on Clarendon Road to only include those buildings which would be directly impacted by the PD rights being left in place. The industrial areas were not subject to any changes and were accepted by the SoS as submitted.

The SoS accepted the revised boundaries for Clarendon Road and the amended Directions were formally confirmed in November 2023.

Watford Local Plan

The plan designates five separate industrial areas within which the loss of employment land will be resisted. It also designates a Primary Office Location along Clarendon Road which, along with the town centre, will be the focus for office development in the Borough and for the protection of existing provision.

The plan includes provision for 85,488sqm of office floorspace and 25,206sqm of industrial floorspace. This represents, relative to identified needs across South West Hertfordshire, an over provision of office floor space and an under provision of industrial floorspace.

The over provision of office floorspace will help neighbouring authorities to meet their needs, reflecting Watford's role as the sub-regional hub of office-based employment. The under provision of industrial floor space is reflective of the dense, residential, urban character of Watford and the lack of suitable sites available for these uses.

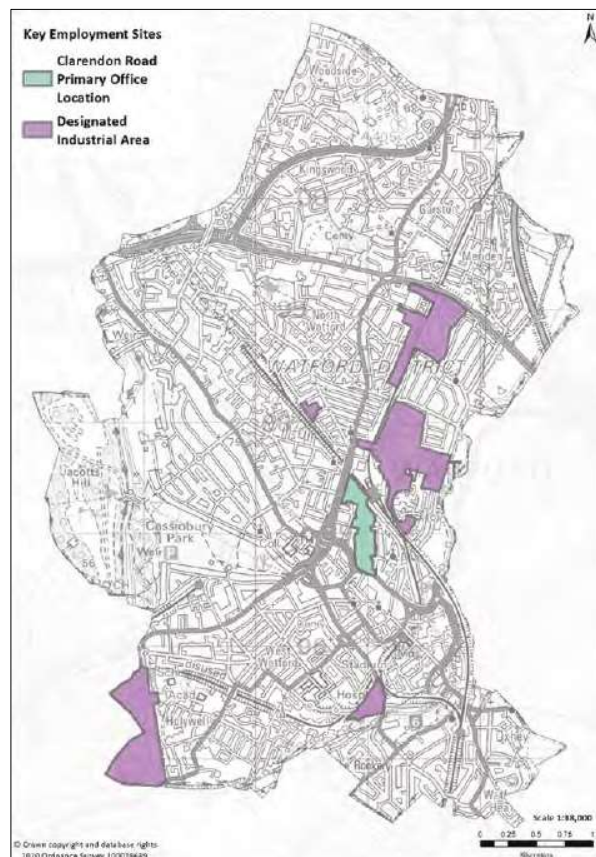


Figure 3: Locations of designated industrial and office areas in the Watford Local Plan

The following tables highlight this provision relative to the identified needs in Watford and South West Hertfordshire.

Table 23: Industrial floorspace supply and targets

Summary of industrial floorspace provision 2021-2038	Floorspace provision (sqm)
South West Hertfordshire requirement	481,500
Watford requirement	98,400
Provision through site allocations	12,799
Provision on sites with planning permission	12,407
Total industrial floorspace provision in the Local Plan	25,206

Table 24: Office floorspace supply and targets

Summary of office floorspace provision 2021-2038	Floorspace provision (sqm)
South West Hertfordshire requirement	188,000
Watford requirement	37,600
Provision through site allocations	19,428
Provision on sites with planning permission	66,060
Total office floorspace provision in the Local Plan	85,488

Policies EM4.1-EM4.6 set out the Plan’s approach to the economy and employment. The indicators in this section will help to monitor progress on the implementation of this strategy across the plan period.

South West Hertfordshire Economic Study

A South West Hertfordshire wide Economic Study was published in October 2024 and was undertaken by Hatch Regeneris. The study reaffirms South West Herts role as a Functional Economic Market Area (FEMA), encompassing Dacorum, Hertsmere, St Albans, Three Rivers, and Watford, based on continuing strong commuting and migration links.

Despite national challenges, South West Herts has had strong economic performance, led by growth in high-value service sectors like ICT and professional services. This is supported by a population that is higher skilled and more entrepreneurial than average. Despite this, Labour market constraints, especially in recruiting digital skills, pose growth barriers.

There is a current oversupply of office floorspace relative to demand in South West Herts with an 11.2% vacancy rate. The study makes clear that this does not mean there is no demand for offices, study shows demand for small high-quality offices in main office markets like central Watford and St Albans however this is unlikely to offset the fall in demand for larger office space outside these areas.

South West Herts maintains a robust relationship with London, notably in industrial and distribution property markets, driven by population growth and online shopping. Industrial demand in the area is likely to persist due to the limited supply of sites in London.

This is an evidence base document that will inform Local Plan policy decisions across South West Hertfordshire and those taken to inform the Local Plan review in Watford.

Employment Floorspace Delivery

This indicator will record the net gains and losses of employment floor space in the Borough over the plan period. It will do this collectively, and by Use Class, to allow an analysis of the overall economic performance of the Borough and the relative performance of individual employment sectors.

This indicator will take account of the changes to the Use Class Order in 2021 which removed B1a, b and c as Use Classes, replacing them with Class E(g)(i), E(g)(ii) and E(g)(iii). For the purposes of office, research and development and light industrial uses, these have been combined into a single figure for each in the new E Class.

Table 25: Net employment floorspace delivered over the monitoring year (sqm)

Use class	2021/2022	2022/2023	2023/2024	2024/2025	2025/2026	Total
B2 (General Industrial)	-1,214	-324	2,352			814
B8 (Storage and Distribution)	-2,121	42	3,294			1,215
E(g)(i) (Offices)	15,507	-6,399	-5,709			3,399
E(g)(ii) (Research and Development)	0	0	0			0
E(g)(iii) (Industrial Processes)	-1,744	-503	1,016			-1,231
Mixed E Class	-64	-7,297	0			-7,361
Total	10,364	-14,481	953			-3,164

What Happened?:

There was an overall net gain of 953 sqm of employment floorspace over the monitoring year.

This was largely due to two large applications:

- 21/01605/VARM - 1-5 Faraday Close And 1-6 Greenhill Crescent (demolition and erection of new commercial buildings, to provide 6,593 sqm of E(g)(iii) Industrial Processes, B2 General Industrial and B8 Storage and Distribution floorspace).
- 23/00462/FUL - Units 1-4 Hathaway Estate, Imperial Way (Redevelopment of the site to provide 1087 sqm of B8 Storage and Distribution floorspace).

Comparisons:

Compared to last year's overall net loss it would appear that this year has continued the trend with a net loss of office floor space.

The loss of office floorspace was largely due to two applications:

- 22/01091/FULM - Cambridge House 47 Clarendon Road (Redevelopment of existing office to result in a net gain of 1563sqm of office floorspace over the plan period)
- 21/01101/FUL – 3 George Street (Redevelopment of existing office and medical centre into a police station)

Many of the applications contributing to the reported loss in the previous monitoring year through demolitions of existing commercial buildings have not yet been subsequently redeveloped.

It will be important to monitor this indicator over a period of time to determine trends and consider the effectiveness of the Local Plan policies in protecting employment floorspace.

Implications for the Local Plan:

Historically there has been concern over a loss of employment floorspace in the Borough which resulted in Article 4 Directions being put in place in 2013 on Clarendon Road and in 2019 on industrial areas. Over the monitoring year, Article 4 Directions have been placed on all the designated employment areas identified in the Local Plan.

It is still early in the plan period and so it is not possible to make any overall conclusions on employment floorspace trends, especially given the very different results in each year so far. This will be monitored closely over the coming years to allow a better understanding of whether this indicator will continue to fluctuate each year or whether a more defined pattern will emerge once the new Local Plan policies are implemented.

Designated Industrial Areas

The plan designates five areas within the Borough as ‘industrial areas’. Policy EM4.2 states that within these locations proposals will only be supported where they result in no net loss of industrial floorspace other than in specific circumstances set out in the policy. The monitoring framework sets a target for there to be no net loss of industrial uses over the plan period within these locations.

Table 26 below highlights net gains and losses in B2, B8, E(g)(iii) employment floorspace within the five industrial areas over the monitoring year.

Over the plan period this indicator will be used to assess the health of the Borough’s key industrial areas and the extent to which they remain viable and growing.

Table 26: Net delivery of employment floor space within designated industrial areas over the monitoring year (sqm)

Use class	2021/2022	2022/2023	2023/2024	2024/2025	2025/2026	Total
B2 (General Industrial)	-1,400	-440	2,352			512
B8 (Storage and Distribution)	-2,121	0	3,288			1,167
E(g)(ii) (Research and Development)	0	0	0			0
E(g)(iii) (Industrial Processes)	-1,342	0	1,016			-326
Mixed E Class	0	-7,297	0			-7,297
Total	-4,863	-7,737	6,656			-5,944

What Happened?:

Over the monitoring year there was a net gain of 6,656 sqm of B2, B8 and E(g)(iii) class floor space within the designated industrial areas.

This means that throughout this monitoring year, 90% of all employment floorspace delivered was delivered within the designated industrial areas.

Comparisons:

This is the first year of the plan period that a net gain of employment floorspace has been recorded. This has largely been the result of applications that were previously demolished in previous years being completed during this monitoring year. Demolition was reported as a net loss before the new development is registered as a net gain.

Implications for the Local Plan:

The industrial areas were designated specifically to try and protect employment floorspace within these strategically important employment areas. It will need to be assessed through this indicator whether this designation is providing suitable protection or whether additional protection or guidance is needed.

It is important that the analysis is done to determine whether any losses continue to be as a result of redevelopment that will provide a net gain in the medium term or whether they are genuine losses that will be longer term with greater impacts on the overall character and economy of the area.

Office Development

Policy EM4.3 states that applications within the Clarendon Road Primary Office Location or the Town Centre that result in any net loss of office floor space will be resisted other than in certain circumstances that are set out in the policy. Policy EM4.3 also states that any office development proposed outside either the Primary Office Location or the Town centre will be subject to assessment against an office development hierarchy (Figure 4.3 of the Local Plan) to try and ensure that these areas remain the focus for office employment in the Borough.

The monitoring framework sets a target for there to be no net loss of E(g)(i) Class office floor space within the Primary Office Location or the Town Centre.

Table 27 highlights net gains or losses of office floor space within the Clarendon Road Primary Office Location and the Town Centre. Over the plan period this indicator will provide key data on the health of Watford as a regional office hub.

Table 27: Net delivery of E(g)(i) office floorspace within the Primary Office Locations (sqm)

	2021/2022	2022/2023	2023/2024	2024/2025	2025/2026	Total
Net E(g)(i) class office floor space delivered within the Clarendon Rd Primary Office Location	20,470	69	-2,780			17,759
Net E(g)(i) class office floor space delivered within the Town Centre	-5,235	0	-776			-5,794
Totals	15,235	69	-3,556			15,304

What Happened?:

Over the monitoring year there was a net loss of -2,780 sqm of office floor space on Clarendon Road. This was wholly due to the demolition over the monitoring year of Cambridge House, 47 Clarendon Road (22/01091/FULM) that is midway through construction and expected to deliver a gross gain of 4,343 sqm of office floorspace once rebuilt.

There was also a net loss of office floorspace within the Town Centre due to the redevelopment of 3 George Street to provide a police station.

Comparisons:

The previous AMRs have reported a net gain in office floorspace on Clarendon Road. This year has seen a net loss in both Clarendon Road and the Town Centre. The Clarendon Road losses are due to redevelopment works currently underway and are expected to result in a net gain over the plan period.

However, the loss of office space in the Town Centre is mostly due to changes of use to a police station.

Implications for the Local Plan:

The Local Plan is clear on the importance of the Clarendon Road Primary Office Location and the Town Centre to the local and regional economy and therefore seeks to resist the loss of existing floorspace whilst encouraging new floorspace to be delivered.

This indicator will be useful in highlighting the health of the office locations and providing evidence on the current state of the local and regional economic market.

There are currently several large redevelopments for mixed-uses including a considerable uplift in office floorspace, under construction along Clarendon Road. As these are delivered over the coming years, it is likely that delivery of office floorspace in the area will be considerable.

Employment Floorspace outside designated employment locations

Although employment floorspace in the Borough is concentrated within the designated industrial and office areas there are other smaller employment sites outside of these which continue to be an important part of the local economy. The Watford Employment Land Review (2017) shows that the risk of losing employment floor space is higher on sites outside these designated areas than it is within.

As such policy EM4.4 seeks to also prevent the loss of employment space outside designated locations other than in specific circumstances as set out in the policy and sets a target of no net loss of employment floor space over the plan period.

Table 28: Net delivery of office floorspace outside of designated employment locations (sqm)

	2021/2022	2022/2023	2023/2024	2024/2025	2025/2026	Total
Net E(g)(i) class floor space delivered outside the Clarendon Rd Primary Office Location or the Town Centre	458	-6,468	-2,153			-8,163

Table 29: Net delivery of B2, B8, E(g)(ii) and E(g)(iii) floorspace outside of the designated industrial areas (sqm)

Use class	2021/2022	2022/2023	2023/2024	2024/2025	2025/2026	Total
B2 (General Industrial)	186	116	0			302
B8 (Storage and Distribution)	0	42	6			48
E(g)(ii) (Research and Development)	0	0	0			0
E(g)(iii) (Industrial Processes)	-402	-503	0			-905
Total	-216	-345	6			-555

What Happened?:

Over the monitoring there was a net loss of -2,153sqm of office floorspace outside of the Primary Office Location and the Town Centre. This loss was on the Former Mothercare building site, which has permission for a change of use from office to C3 residential, and 56D-58A Vicarage Road

There was also a modest net gain of industrial floor space of 6 sqm outside the designated industrial areas. This was due to redevelopment of a small B8 site to residential use and the construction of a

B8 storage building at Oxhey Skatepark, resulting in a minor net gain in B8 floorspace outside of the designated industrial site.

Comparisons:

In the first few years of the Plan period there has been a small loss of industrial floorspace outside the designated areas. This is the first year a net gain has been reported albeit a minimal one.

Similar to last year, this year saw a significant loss of office floorspace outside of the Clarendon Road office area, entirely as a result of one major development site being developed for residential use.

Implications for the Local Plan:

The Primary Office Location and employment area designations are intended to be the main focus for employment floorspace in the Borough, but the Local Plan is clear that employment floorspace outside these areas should also be subject to protection.

Whilst it is concerning to see a large loss of office floorspace this year, it was all on one site that has provided 145 affordable housing units. There are very few extant permissions of a similar nature in the pipeline and the protection provided by the new Local Plan should help limit the number of future proposals of this type. It will however be important to monitor this indicator over the coming years to see whether this trend continues and whether additional interventions might be required in the future.

Employment Land Available

This indicator will highlight the current level of employment land permitted on applications which have not yet been implemented. This again takes into account permissions relating to the old Use Classes Order as well as the new Use Classes Order.

Table 30: Employment floor space available in Watford (with planning permission, not yet implemented/completed) (sqm)

Use class	2021/2022	2022/2023	2023/2024	2024/2025	2025/2026
B2 (General Industrial)	4,469	5,056	-3,156		
B8 (Storage and Distribution)	3,220	4,380	9,743		
E(g)(i) (Offices)	25,416	26,160	27,617		
E(g)(ii) (Research and Development)	250	-428	2,484		
E(g)(iii) (Industrial Processes)	3,170	13,599	2,406		
Mixed E Class	6,989	5,165	0		
Total	43,514	53,932	39,094		

What Happened?:

Currently, there is a total of 39,094 sqm of employment floorspace available, taking into account all planning permissions that have not yet been implemented. This is a significant amount of committed employment floorspace that should provide a substantial supply going forward.

By far the largest amount of floorspace available is in E(g)(i) Class office uses which accounts for over 70% of all floorspace available.

Comparisons:

The amount of floorspace permitted for employment use has fallen since last year but remains a substantial amount of future supply.

This increase has been mostly in Class E(g)(ii) and B8 floorspace due to applications being granted for self-storage facilities and the redevelopment of a site on Colonial Way.

Additionally, there was an application granted for 4856 sqm of E(g)(ii) floorspace at Warners Brother's Leavesden Studio, however it has not been reported as a commitment due to a substantial part of the site falling within Three Rivers District Council.

Implications for the Local Plan:

There is a substantial amount of employment floorspace currently permitted in the Borough, particularly for E(g)(i) office uses. It is reasonable to predict that a significant proportion of this floorspace will come forward in the short-medium term, contributing to meeting the floorspace targets in the Local Plan.

Delivery of Site Allocations

Chapter 13 of the Local Plan allocates several sites for employment uses. Details of any progress that has taken place on these allocations over the monitoring year can be found in chapter 12 of this AMR.

Training and Skills

Policy EM4.6 of the Local Plan seeks to ensure that major development could provide employment and training initiatives for local people. This indicator will report any training programmes and apprenticeships that have arisen as a result of new development during the monitoring year.

Table 31: Training schemes and apprenticeships delivered as a result of development being permitted

Applications with training schemes or apprenticeship programmes for local people	
Application Reference	Details of scheme (description, type of scheme, number of people involved, length of time)
22/00484/FULM - 50 Clarendon Road	A Local Employment Plan has been secured through a S106 agreement to ensure the benefits of the scheme are realised locally through obligations to employ local residents in the construction of the development.

What Happened?:

Over the monitoring there were one formal training scheme secured as a result of new development through a s106 agreement.

Comparisons:

It is disappointing not to have seen more progress on this over the monitoring year however this is likely due to the limited number of major applications granted this monitoring year. There are over five major applications with Skills and Employment Plans that are currently pending consideration.

There are procedures being put in place with Development Management to try and secure skills and employment plans from major development over the coming year.

4. A Vibrant Town: Town Centre and Retail

Watford has a strongly performing sub-regional Town Centre, along with a supporting District Centre which incorporates a wide range of services and facilities, and a series of Local Centres that meet the day-to-day needs of communities across the Borough. The Local Plan designates these areas as shown in Figure 4.

Watford functions as a sub-regional Town Centre that serves residents of the town and beyond, drawing people from across South West Hertfordshire. The wide availability of facilities and shops helps to attract people into it, sustaining the dynamism and vibrancy of the area as well as supporting a large number of local jobs and businesses.

The continued success of the Town Centre and other local centres can reduce the need to travel by car, encourage combined trips and promote sustainable transport methods such as walking and cycling.

Incorporating flexibility within the retail policies of the Plan was important in allowing the centres to evolve in response to the changing nature of the retail market, ensuring that they remain vibrant and successful.

It is vital that Town Centre, District Centre and Local Centres performance over the plan period is monitored. The indicators in this section will report on the provision and loss of traditional retail uses, and of all other uses that fall within the definition of 'Main Town Centre Uses' in the NPPF. It will also assess current vacancy rates within the centres as a key indicator of centre health.

Watford Local Plan

Policies VT5.1, VT5.2 and VT5.3 set out the Plan's approach to development in the Town Centre, District Centre and Local Centres.

These policies are reflective of national policy; applying a sequential, 'town centre first' approach to the delivery of retail, and other Main Town Centre Uses within Watford. This supports the provision of 'Main Town Centre Uses' in the Town Centre first, then Edge of Centre locations, then Local Centres and only supporting limited convenience floorspace outside these centres where they support the day-to-day needs of residents at new strategic sites.

There are several mixed-use residential allocations in the Plan that are located within the Town Centre boundary, and it is likely that the population living within the Town Centre will increase over the plan

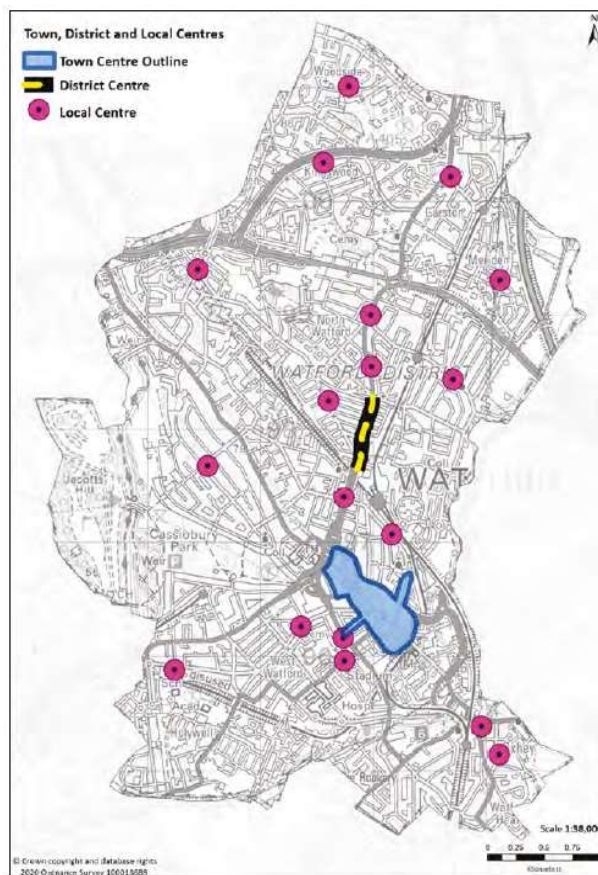


Figure 4 - The location of the designated Town Centre, District Centre and Local Centres

period as a result. The provision of additional residential uses within the Town Centre can encourage increased footfall and promote the continued use of shops, services and businesses. It can also reduce the need for car parking due to the increased availability and viability of walking, cycling and public transport options for short journeys.

Chapter 2 of this AMR provides data on the delivery of residential dwellings in the Town Centre SDA (Table 5) and chapter 13 provides details and updates on the delivery of all allocated sites, including those within the Town Centre. Although residential uses are supported in the Town Centre, the Plan emphasises the importance of retaining active frontages on ground floors even if residential uses are being provided above. All development in the Town Centre should be designed sensitively with regard to heritage assets and conservation areas.

Delivery of Retail uses over the Monitoring Year

The plan supports the provision of new retail uses within the centres as defined in Figure 4. Table 32 records the net delivery of retail uses over the monitoring year within the Town Centre, District Centre, Local Centres and elsewhere in the Borough.

Table 32: Net delivery of retail E(a) floor space (sqm) over the monitoring year

Location	2021/2022	2022/2023	2023/2024	2024/2025	2025/2026	Total
Town Centre	711	144	0			855
District Centre	0	58	0			58
Local Centres	-163	98	-233			-298
Outside Centres	126	-175	108			59
Total	674	125	-125			674

What Happened?:

Over the monitoring year there was an overall net loss of 125sqm in Class E(a) retail floorspace across the Borough.

A net loss of -233sqm of retail floorspace occurred within the designated Local Centres, virtue of two applications on Vicarage Road, one of which has been redeveloped to provide 220sqm of Main Town Centre use floorspace.

Outside of the designated centres there was a gain of 108sqm. There was no change in both the District Centre and Town Centre.

Comparisons:

There was a net loss of retail floorspace this year compared to last. Whilst there has been a net gain within the Town Centre in previous years, there was no net loss of retail floor space within the Town or District Centre over this morning year.

It will be important to monitor the growth and loss of retail floorspace to assess trends regarding the health and viability of the designated centres.

Implications for the Local Plan:

Retail floorspace in the Town Centre, District Centre and Local Centres can demonstrate their viability. Whilst there was a net loss of retail space this monitoring year, the use continues to be Main Town Centre Use which contributes to the vitality of these areas.

The Local Plan highlights the importance of these centres to the economic performance of the Borough, and monitoring the gains and losses in retail floorspace will provide a measure by which the Council can determine the success of the Local Plan's retail policies in protecting centres as the primary locations for retail uses.

Main Town Centre Uses in the Town Centre, District Centre and Local Centres

This indicator assesses the delivery and provision of all 'Main Town Centre Uses' in the different designated centres, broadening the previous indicator which focused only on class E(a) retail uses. This indicator will report on the provision of all the following uses. These are all defined as Main Town Centre Uses in the NPPF glossary definition.

- Retail units
- Leisure uses
- Cinemas
- Restaurants
- Drive through restaurants
- Bars and Pubs
- Nightclubs
- Casinos
- Health and Fitness centres
- Indoor bowling
- Bingo halls
- Offices
- Theatres
- Museums
- Galleries
- Concert halls
- Hotels
- Conference facilities

Table 33 below sets out the net delivery of any 'Main Town Centre Uses' within the Town Centre, District Centre and Local Centres.

Note that the figures in this table include the retail provision that was assessed in isolation in Table 32 above.

Also note that these figures **do not** include Class E(g (i)) Office floorspace which, although counting as Main Town Centre Uses, were assessed in the previous chapter on employment. This is to avoid the

results in this table being distorted by the net gain/loss of office floorspace which tends to be considerable in Watford.

Table 33: Net delivery of Main Town Centre Uses over the monitoring year (sqm)

Location	2021/2022	2022/2023	2023/2024	2024/2025	2025/2026	Total
Town Centre	-3,748	1,005	0			-2,743
District Centre	0	175	39			214
Local Centres	-163	46	220			103
Total	-3,911	1,226	259			-2,426

What Happened?:

Over the monitoring year there was a net gain of 259sqm of Main Town Centre Use floorspace within designated centres. This included 39sqm of floorspace within the District Centre, a net gain of 220sqm within the Local Centres and no net gain within the Town Centre.

The net gain reported in the District Centre was wholly due to a single application (22/00960/FUL) for an extension of an existing restaurant.

The gain reported in the Local Centre was largely due to a single application (21/01217/NONMAT) for a mixed-use development on Vicarage Road, resulting in a net gain of 220sqm of Main Town Centre Use.

Comparisons:

There has again been a net gain in Main Town Centre uses across the Borough this monitoring year. However, there has been no gain in Main Town Centre uses within the Town Centre reported. The large gain in the previous monitoring year was largely due to a single application (21/01731/FUL) for a new restaurant of 747sqm.

Implications for the Local Plan:

The net gain in Main Town Centre uses reported this year is positive, particularly the completion of different Main Town Centre uses within the Local Centres.

This indicator will report trends over a period of time to try and provide evidence as to the health of the Town, District and Local Centres. It is likely that these results will fluctuate as developments are granted, started and completed.

Table 35 sets out the current proportion of centres that are in a Main Town Centre uses as defined in the NPPF. This is assessed in terms of number of units.

This indicator will be useful to monitor over the plan period as it will provide an indication of the health of the centres and the extent to which they remain viable locations, not just for retail but for a range of other services, facilities, leisure, arts and cultural uses.

This data is collected through the undertaking of a retail survey by Hertfordshire County Council. The last retail survey of the Town Centre was conducted in mid-2023 and was reported over the last monitoring year.

Over this monitoring year, a retail survey of the Local and District Centres was conducted by the Planning Policy Team.

Table 35: % of each centre that are in active town centre uses

Location	2021/2022	2022/2023	2023/2024	2024/2025	2025/2026	Total
Town Centre	<i>No data available this year. Data will be reported in subsequent AMRs</i>	84%	<i>No data available this year. Data will be reported in subsequent AMRs</i>			84%
District Centre	<i>No data available this year. Data will be reported in subsequent AMRs</i>	<i>No data available this year. Data will be reported in subsequent AMRs</i>	80%			80%
Local Centres	<i>No data available this year. Data will be reported in subsequent AMRs</i>	<i>No data available this year. Data will be reported in subsequent AMRs</i>	71%			71%

What Happened?:

80% of units in the District Centre were reported as being within a Main Town centre use as defined in the NPPF. 71% of the units within the Local Centres are of Main Town Centre use.

No new data was available this year for the Town Centre.

Comparisons:

A retail survey of the Local and District Centres was conducted over this monitoring year. There is a high proportion of Main Town Centre units in the Local and Main Centres. However, this is the first year this data has been reported therefore, comparisons cannot be made.

A retail survey for the Town Centre was not conducted this year, data will be reported in subsequent AMRs.

Implications for the Local Plan:

It is positive to see that the Local and District centres have a large proportion of Main Town Centre uses that are considered to contribute to the vitality of these areas.

This indicator will allow the Council to track trends within the Town, District and Local Centres and determine how effective the retail policies are although it is recognised that the market plays a part in this which the Council has limited control over. It is expected that data will be available in subsequent monitoring years to allow for comparison.

Vacancy Rates in Town, District and Local Centres

This indicator will monitor the number, location and proportion of vacant ground floor units within the Town Centre, District Centre and Local Centres.

Having a large number of vacant units within a centre can have impacts on the centre's perceived and actual vitality and viability, affecting the surrounding public realm, people's perceptions of a place and the local economy.

Table 36 assesses the number and percentage of units in each of the centres that are vacant as of the end of each monitoring year.

These figures only include ground floor units as these have a greater impact on the vitality of a centre and ensures that the data is not distorted by a large number of upper floor residential units, which are less likely to be vacant, being included.

It is recognised that there may be some units that become vacant and active again within the same monitoring year which will not be recorded in these figures but as there would be no net difference over the monitoring year, this is not considered to be a limitation in the accuracy of the data.

This data is collected through the undertaking of a retail survey by Hertfordshire County Council. The last retail survey of the Town Centre was conducted in mid-2023 and was reported over the last monitoring year.

Over this monitoring year, a retail survey of the Local and District Centres was conducted by the Planning Policy Team.

Table 36: Vacancy rates in the Town Centre, District Centre and Local Centres

Location		2021/2022	2022/2023	2023/2024	2024/2025	2025/2026
Town centre	No.	<i>No data was available in this year.</i>	27 units	<i>No data available this year. Data will be reported in subsequent AMRs</i>		
	%	-	7.4%	-		
Atria shopping Centre	No.	<i>No data available this year. Data will be reported in subsequent AMRs</i>	17 units	<i>No data available this year. Data will be reported in subsequent AMRs</i>		
	%	-	13.4%	-		
District centre	No.	<i>No data available this year. Data will be reported in subsequent AMRs</i>	<i>No data available this year. Data will be reported in subsequent AMRs</i>	5 units		
	%	-	-	2.4%		
Local centres	No.	<i>No data available this year. Data will be reported in subsequent AMRs</i>	<i>No data available this year. Data will be reported in subsequent AMRs</i>	24 units		
	%	-	-	5.5%		
Total	No.	-	44 units	31 units		
	%	-	8.9%	5.6%		

What Happened?:

There was no retail survey conducted within the Town Centre or Atria Shopping Centre this monitoring year.

There was a retail survey conducted this year of the District and Local Centres. Local Centres have a vacancy rate of 5.5% and the District Centre has a vacancy rate of 2.4%.

Comparisons:

There was no retail survey completed last year against which to compare the Town, Atria, District and Local Centres data.

Implications for the Local Plan:

It is pleasing to see that despite the COVID pandemic and the long-term change in patterns of consumer behaviours, there appears to be low vacancy rates in the District and Local Centres. It is important that the Council, in conjunction with Hertfordshire County Council, continue to undertake these surveys on an annual basis to monitor changes and trends.

5. An Attractive Town: Design and Building Height

Well-designed development provides an opportunity to make a positive contribution to the character and appearance of an area. Equally, poorly designed developments can lead to negative impacts on both the character and environment of a place as well as on residents' health and quality of life.

Ensuring that Local Plan policies contribute to achieving a high quality of design is therefore crucial in creating successful places both in terms of the internal and external environment where people live. This can help to create a safe, attractive and sustainable Borough that improves the health and wellbeing of residents.

The policies in the Local Plan do not, therefore, only focus on a developments external appearance but also its sustainability, its compliance with internal living standards, and its impacts on the surrounding area. They provide both general design principles and specific design requirements.

Watford has experienced a significant increase in the number of applications for taller buildings, particularly within the Core Development Area (CDA). A key issue in the preparation of the new Local Plan was therefore how high-density development can be incorporated into the Borough without having unacceptable impacts on the character of the area or on important heritage assets.

The Local Plan sets out specific requirements for buildings that exceed set base building heights. These heights vary depending on location as shown in Figure 5. Buildings exceeding these heights should be of outstanding design and provide substantial public and sustainability benefits.

The AMR will report on the extent to which the standards for design set out in the Local Plan are being met and how the policies are being applied in practice. It will record specifically the number of applications where design is a listed reason for refusal and on both refusals and approvals of development that proposes to exceed the base building heights.

This section of the AMR should be read in conjunction with Table 22 of the housing chapter which outlined the extent to which internal space and accessibility standards were being met, and Table 10 of the housing chapter which sets out the average density of new residential development in the Borough.

In this early stage of the plan period, it has proved difficult to source reliable data for some indicators in this section in particular. Processes have been put in place that have enabled more comprehensive coverage of the indicators this year.

Watford Local Plan

Policies QD6.1 to QD6.4 set out broad and detailed design principles that will direct the delivery of high-quality development in the Borough.

These principles include the following topics:

- **Character and Identity** - Making sure new buildings and streets are attractive and distinctive including consideration of how the area looks, feels and functions. They should make a positive contribution to the character of the area so that it is identifiable and relatable to residents.
- **Built Form** - Ensure that the scale and massing of proposed buildings relate to their local context.
- **Active Frontages** - New buildings should include an active frontage to ensure there is a visual and physical relationship between the street and the building.
- **Movement and Connectivity** - Streets should be efficient, convenient, legible and permeable to prioritise non-vehicle travel.
- **Views** - New development should contribute positively towards important views in the Borough.
- **Sustainability** - Development should be designed to minimise negative impacts on the environment and embrace sustainability principles. This should include measures to reduce the use of resources.

Policy QD6.5 sets out the criteria that a proposal needs to meet for it to be acceptable as a 'taller building' in the Borough. The height of new development has become a significant issue for Watford and as such this policy, and the monitoring of it, is an important one for the future growth of the Borough over the plan period.

Area of the borough	Base building height
Watford Gateway	Up to 8 storeys on a street frontage, stepping up to 10 storeys to the rear.
Town Centre Strategic Development Area	Up to 5 storeys on the High Street, stepping up to 8 storeys to the rear.
Colne Valley Strategic Development Area	Up to 6 storeys.
Outside of the Core Development Area	Up to 4 storeys.

Figure 5: Base Building Heights

The plan sets four different base building heights within each of the three Strategic Development Areas (SDAs) and then a single base height for any proposals that are located outside the Core Development Area (CDA). These base building heights can be seen in Figure 5 below. Development proposed above these base building heights will be considered a 'taller building' and subject to the requirements of Policy QD6.5.

This AMR will record the number of taller buildings (over the base building heights) that have been approved over the monitoring year and the number of applications where Policy QD6.5 is listed as a reason for refusal.

High Quality Design

This indicator will provide details of how many applications the Council received where Policy QD6.2 or Policy QD6.4 are listed as reasons for refusal.

Table 36 includes all new build development, both residential and non-residential, but it excludes any extensions or other householder applications where the above policies have been referenced.

Table 36: Number of applications where Policy QD6.2 (Design Principles) or QD6.4 (Building Design) are listed as a reason for refusal.

Location	2021/2022	2022/2023	2023/2024	2024/2025	2025/2026	Total
Residential	<i>No data available this year. Data will be reported in subsequent AMRs</i>	<i>No data available this year. Data will be reported in subsequent AMRs</i>	20			20
Non-residential B use	<i>No data available this year. Data will be reported in subsequent AMRs</i>	<i>No data available this year. Data will be reported in subsequent AMRs</i>	0			0
Non-residential E use	<i>No data available this year. Data will be reported in subsequent AMRs</i>	<i>No data available this year. Data will be reported in subsequent AMRs</i>	1			1
Other uses	<i>No data available this year. Data will be reported in subsequent AMRs</i>	<i>No data available this year. Data will be reported in subsequent AMRs</i>	0			0
Total			21			21

What Happened?:

20 applications for new residential development had QD6.2 or QD6.4 listed as a reason for refusal. One of these applications was a major residential application.

One application for commercial Class E Use had QD4.2 and Q4.6 listed as reasons for refusal.

Comparisons:

This is the first year that this data has been reported. Comparisons will be made in subsequent AMRs. It will be interesting to see whether there is a trend in the number of applications being refused for design reasons.

Implications for the Local Plan:

Policies QD6.2 and QD6.4 require that new development is of high quality with regards to character, identity, built form, active frontages, movement, connectivity, views and sustainability. By monitoring how many applications have been refused fully or partially based on their compliance with these policies, the extent to which the standards for design set out in the Local Plan are being met, and how the policies are being applied in practice, can be reported.

Public Realm

Providing a high quality and functional public realm is crucial to creating places in which communities and businesses can thrive. Policy QD6.3 requires new development to be designed in a way that makes places safe, accessible, inclusive and attractive. Criteria a-f of this policy will ensure that new development has a positive impact on the surrounding public realm.

Table 37 below reports the number of new build applications where Policy QD6.3 is listed as a reason for refusal.

Table 37: Number of applications where Policy QD6.3 (Public Realm) is listed as a reason for refusal

Location	2021/2022	2022/2023	2023/2024	2024/2025	2025/2026	Total
Residential	<i>No data available this year. Data will be reported in subsequent AMRs</i>	<i>No data available this year. Data will be reported in subsequent AMRs</i>	1			1
Non-residential B use	<i>No data available this year. Data will be reported in subsequent AMRs</i>	<i>No data available this year. Data will be reported in subsequent AMRs</i>	0			0
Non-residential E use	<i>No data available this year. Data will be reported in subsequent AMRs</i>	<i>No data available this year. Data will be reported in subsequent AMRs</i>	0			0
Other uses	<i>No data available this year. Data will be reported in subsequent AMRs</i>	<i>No data available this year. Data will be reported in subsequent AMRs</i>	0			0
Total			1			1

What Happened?:

One application this year was refused with policy QD6.3 listed as a reason for refusal. This was application 23/00683/FULM at 250 Lower High Street.

Comparisons:

This is the first year that data is available for this indicator, therefore, comparisons cannot be made.

Implications for the Local Plan:

Policy QD6.3 requires new development to be designed in a way that makes places safe, accessible, inclusive and attractive. It is important to monitor how this policy is being applied in practice.

Public realm improvements and projects can be undertaken without links to a planning application or a new development. Over the plan period, the AMR will also provide a written commentary on any major public realm enhancements undertaken in the Borough over the monitoring year. This will likely not be an exhaustive list and is provided for information only.

During the 2023 to 2024 monitoring year, the following public realm projects were completed:

- Whippendell Road Parade – Improvements to the pavement, pedestrian crossing, bus stop curbs and enhanced private business frontages.
- Victoria Passage – Creation of a level footpath for accessible walking and cycling and CCTV installation.
- Foxhill Play Space – Modernisation of amenities, inclusive equipment, and landscaping enhancements.
- Watford Junction footpaths improvements – Resurfaced footpath, refurbished hoarding, repainting and applying an anti-graffiti coating, and old timber upright posts removed.
- Meriden Park improvements – Bulb planting to enhance biodiversity and create a welcoming environment for visitors.

Building Height

Building height is an important issue for the Borough, both for local residents and for the Council. There has been a growing prevalence in applications for taller buildings in the Borough. Policy QD6.5 sets out the criteria that a proposal over the base building heights must meet for it to be acceptable.

Tables 38 and 39 include two sets of data relating to building height. Table 38 shows the number of applications totally completed over the monitoring year that were over the Local Plan base building heights in Figure 5 above.

These applications were all approved prior to the base building heights being formally adopted in the Local Plan.

The second indicator reports the number of applications that were granted permission over the monitoring year despite being above the base building heights.

Table 38: Applications completed over the monitoring year that are in excess of the base building heights

Core Development Area (CDA)/Not Core Development Area	2023/2024
Not CDA	44 comps
	6 storeys
Not CDA	9 comps
	5 storeys
Not CDA	1 comp
	5 storeys
Not CDA	1 comp
	5 storeys

What Happened?:

Table 38 shows that there were four permissions completed over the monitoring year that were above the base building heights (completed means every unit on the scheme has been recorded as completed). All of these were outside the CDA, delivering a total of 55 dwellings and were 5 or 6 storeys.

Comparisons:

Last monitoring year, there were three permissions completed over the monitoring year that were above the base building heights. Two of these were outside the CDA and one was in the Town Centre SDA. These delivered a total of 190 dwellings and were 5, 6 and 8 storeys.

This trend has continued this year, with a few permissions being completed outside the core development areas that are one or two storeys above the base building height.

Implications for the Local Plan:

Similar to the previous monitoring year, all permissions in Table 38 were approved prior to the adoption of the new Local Plan and the full implementation of the base building heights. It is expected that the policies in the new Local Plan will give the Council greater ability to resist inappropriately tall development and will ensure that any proposals above the base building heights are of outstanding quality and that they provide substantial public benefits.

Table 39: Applications granted planning permission that are over the base building heights

Core Development Area (CDA)/Not Core Development Area	2023/2024
Watford Gateway SDA	247 dwellings
	24 storeys
Watford Gateway SDA	168 dwellings
	23 storeys
Not CDA	279 dwellings
	13 storeys
Not CDA	95 dwellings
	5 storeys

What Happened?:

Over the monitoring year, four applications were approved that were in excess of the base building heights set out in Policy QD6.5.

Two of the applications that were within the Watford Gateway SDA. These were 50 Clarendon Road (22/00484/FULM) which was allowed at appeal and a variation to an existing permission at Hannay House 37-39 Clarendon Road.

Two of the applications that were granted in excess of the base building heights were outside the Core Development Area. The 13-storey development granted is on Sydney Road and the five-storey development is on Rickmansworth Road.

These applications will deliver a total of 789 dwellings plus office and retail floorspace.

Comparisons:

This is the second year where the new Local Plan policy on building heights has been in place. Therefore, it is hard to make any long-term conclusions this year.

The 24-storey building that was granted permission this monitoring year was 50 Clarendon Road which was initially refused and then allowed at appeal. However, the Hannay House 37-39 Clarendon Road development was granted in 2018 and varied in 2023.

It is important to note that whilst some buildings are above the base building height, they must be of outstanding quality and provide substantial public and sustainability benefits.

This indicator will be monitored going forward to show how much of the Boroughs possible future growth is to come forward on tall buildings, and where these applications are concentrated.

Implications for the Local Plan:

The building height policy does not prevent buildings over the base building heights being delivered, rather it requires developments that exceed them to be of outstanding design, have significant public benefits and substantial sustainability benefits in order for them to be permitted.

It will be interesting to keep this table updated over the plan period to consider whether the number of buildings above the base building heights decreases or whether the Borough is still subject to development in excess of these.

Table 40 below sets out the number of applications that were refused on the basis of their height. This, along with the above indicator on approvals, will help to make an assessment on the effectiveness of this policy.

Table 40: Applications refused over the monitoring year in which Policy QD6.5 (Building Height) was listed as a reason for refusal

Location	2021/2022	2022/2023	2023/2024	2024/2025	2025/2026	Total
Watford Gateway SDA	<i>No data available this year. Data will be reported in subsequent AMRs</i>	<i>No data available this year. Data will be reported in subsequent AMRs</i>	0			0
Town Centre SDA	<i>No data available this year. Data will be reported in subsequent AMRs</i>	<i>No data available this year. Data will be reported in subsequent AMRs</i>	0			0
Colne Valley SDA	<i>No data available this year. Data will be reported in subsequent AMRs</i>	<i>No data available this year. Data will be reported in subsequent AMRs</i>	0			0
Outside the CDA	<i>No data available this year. Data will be reported in subsequent AMRs</i>	<i>No data available this year. Data will be reported in subsequent AMRs</i>	0			0
Total			0			0

What Happened?:

No applications refused over the monitoring year had Policy QD6.5 (Building Height) listed as a reason for refusal.

Comparisons:

This is the first year that data is available for this indicator, therefore, comparisons cannot be made.

Implications for the Local Plan:

The building height policy does not prevent buildings over the base building heights being delivered, rather it requires developments that exceed them to be of outstanding design, have significant public benefits and substantial sustainability benefits in order for them to be permitted.

It will be interesting to keep this table updated over the plan period to consider whether proposed developments over the base building height continue to be of outstanding quality and provide substantial public and sustainability benefit.

6. The Historic Environment

Both national and local policy attach great importance to the preservation of the historic environment. The NPPF recognises heritage assets as an irreplaceable resource that should be given great weight in decision making, whilst the Local Plan reiterates the need to conserve, and where possible enhance, their significance.

Watford has a wide range of important heritage assets, including locally and nationally listed buildings, several Conservation Areas, as well as historic parks and gardens. These assets have considerable value to local people and add significantly to the character of the town.

The following list replicated from paragraph 7.2 of the Local Plan sets out some of the key elements of the town's heritage:

- Surviving buildings from the medieval core of the town (St Mary's Church, Almshouses, Fuller Free School);
- 18th Century town houses (Frogmore House, 97 High Street, Little Cassiobury and Watford Museum);
- Industrial heritage;
- Parks, gardens and cemeteries;
- Residential streets and buildings of the Victorian period; and
- Innovative twentieth-century buildings and housing developments.

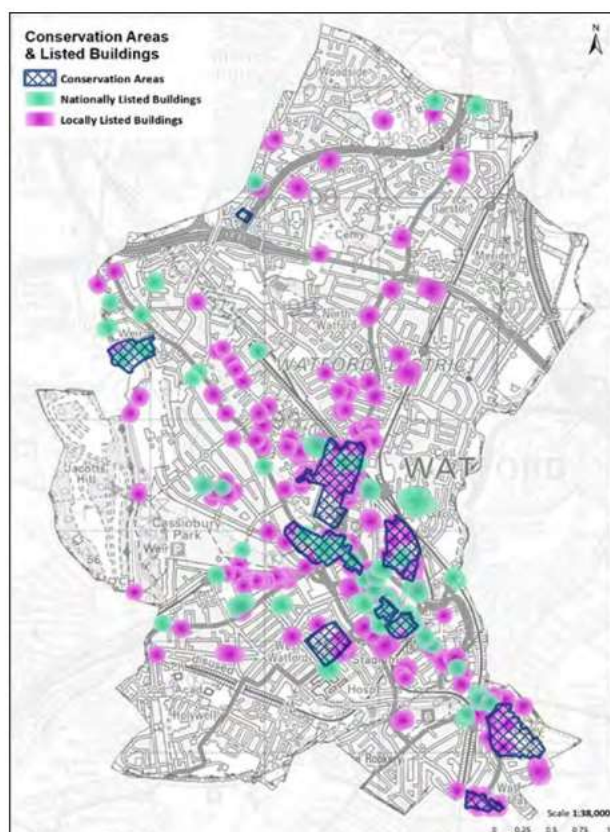


Figure 6 - Heritage assets in Watford

Watford Local Plan

Policies HE7.1 to HE7.4 outline the Council's approach to the historic environment in the Local Plan.

Overall, the policies in the Plan seek to give great weight to the conservation of important historic assets and to avoiding and mitigating any possible harm to their significance.

This AMR will monitor the impacts of new development on the historic environment, as well as reporting on any major heritage projects or issues that have arisen over the monitoring year.

Conservation Areas

The town's historic environment is protected by the designation of several Conservation Areas. The existing Conservation Areas in the Borough can be seen in Figure 6.

Conservation Areas exist to protect and enhance the special architectural and historical interest of a place. Applications submitted within them are subject to additional planning controls and considerations in order to protect their unique character.

The section below reports progress on the Conservation Areas Management Plan and any changes to the Conservation Areas over the monitoring year.

What Happened?:

Work on a review of the Watford Conservation Areas Management Plan progressed over the monitoring year. The work was undertaken to ensure that the plan reflects the latest policy and guidance.

An informal, early-stage consultation took place between August and September 2022. A set of actions to help support and enhance the Borough's conservation areas was developed as a result of this process.

Following this, five face to face meetings with members of the local community took place, making provision for each of the Borough's 10 conservation areas. These were completed between February and March 2023. An online consultation using the Commonplace platform also took place at the same time, to help assess wider support for the proposed actions.

Following this consultation and the associated stakeholder engagement, a finalised document was produced. This was adopted as an action plan for the period 2023-2026 at a Cabinet meeting just during this monitoring year on 5th June 2023.

The adopted document sets out actions that the Council will take to ensure that the special architectural or historic interest of the Borough's conservation areas is protected for future generations. Resourcing pressures have currently slowed progress on the implementation of the plan.

Implications for the Local Plan:

The adopted Conservation Management Plan – Actions 2023-2026 will improve access to information for residents, enabling them to better understand the planning requirements that relate to their homes. This will help ensure that planning applications that sit within, or adjoin, conservation areas respond to the unique character of the area in accordance with Policies HE7.1 and HE7.2 of the Local Plan.

Heritage at Risk

Every year Historic England publishes a Heritage at Risk report that identifies those sites most at risk of being lost as a result of neglect, decay or inappropriate development. However, this report only includes buildings of Grade I or Grade II* status, with the exception of places of worship, which can be included even at Grade II. The Council produces a local Buildings at Risk (BAR) register that also includes other types of Grade II properties. The list was last formally updated in 2017, but any additional buildings at risk that have come to light in the intervening years have been included below.

This indicator will report any individual assets or conservation areas in Watford that are considered at risk and any changes from the previous year. The objective over the plan period is to reduce the number of assets at risk and to prevent any additional assets from becoming at risk.

Table 42: Heritage Assets at risk in Watford

Asset Name/Conservation Area	Condition and Description
Little Cassiobury and former stable block, Hempstead Rd (Grade II*)	Condition poor – Late C17 house built as dower house to Cassiobury. Last occupied as offices, the building has been vacant for many years. The building was raised to Priority A by Historic England following site visits in September 2022. Hertfordshire County Council currently have the building up for sale.
Gateway and attached walls of approx. 30m northwest of 42, The Gardens (Grade II)	Condition poor/fair – Mid to late C16 walls and gateway, altered c.1830, formed part of the gardens of Cassiobury. Visible cracks and movement in brickwork (loose and missing bricks), missing pointing, and vegetation growing on and around structure noted when assessed in 2017.
Administration Block at Watford General Hospital, Vicarage Road (Grade II)	Poor – Former Watford Union Workhouse of 1838 with later alterations. Currently disused and in need of extensive renovation work. It was damaged by a car impact over the 21-22 monitoring year, although that has since been repaired.
97 High Street (Grade II)	Poor - Townhouse of c.1740 with notable surviving interior. The building is in a state of considerable disrepair, although some works have taken place since 2020 to limit further water ingress.
Watford Place, 27 King Street (Grade II)	Poor/Fair – Georgian mansion of c1797, altered c.1822. One wing severely damaged by fire in 2015.
The Old Station House, 147 St Albans Road (Grade II)	Poor/Fair – The former ticket office of Watford's original station, built in 1837. Currently unoccupied and has been subject to some vandalism. Permission has been granted for re-use of the building as part of redevelopment of the surrounding land but renovation work on the building has yet to start.

What Happened?:

There are currently 6 designated heritage assets considered to be at risk in Watford.

No heritage assets have been removed from the register over the monitoring year.

Applications Impacting Historic Assets

The recording of an asset as a nationally or locally listed building does not prevent applications for it being submitted. Listed buildings do, however, have significant additional protection when applications are received by the Council.

Policy HE7.1, HE7.2 and HE7.3 of the Local Plan seek to ensure that development impacting a heritage asset does not diminish its significance, and where possible it should enhance it. All applications will be determined in accordance with an asset's significance and heritage value.

Historic England are consulted as required on developments that could have an impact on designated heritage assets, and provide comments based on their expert opinions. This indicator records any applications that have been granted permission by the Council over the monitoring year contrary to advice received from Historic England. The objective is for there to be no applications granted contrary to Historic England advice.

Table 43: Number of applications granted contrary to Historic England advice

2021/2022	2022/2023	2023/2024	2024/2025	2025/2026	Total
<i>No data available this year. Data will be reported in subsequent AMRs</i>	0	0			0
Total	0	0			0

What Happened?:

There were no applications granted over the monitoring year contrary to advice received from Historic England.

Comparisons:

It is pleasing to see that the Council has not acted against the specialist advice of Historic England during any monitoring year.

Implications for the Local Plan:

The preservation of the historic environment and historic assets is a key part of the Local Plan and will likely be a key part of any future plan review. Following Historic England guidance will be an important part of this.

Changes impacting Historic Assets

The following table will report any nationally or locally listed buildings that have been granted permission for, or otherwise subject to works, loss, damage, redevelopment, extension or change of use over the monitoring year.

Table 44: Changes and alterations to heritage assets over the monitoring year

Name of Asset	Description of change	Reasons for change
Former Workhouse building - Administration Block at Watford General Hospital, Vicarage Road	Repair of damage caused by a car colliding with the building.	Repair works carried out during the monitoring year.
Little Cassiobury and former stable block, Hempstead Rd	Historic England have raised the risk category of Little Cassiobury to Priority A, their highest priority level.	Historic England assessment of the condition of the building.
97 High Street	A Dangerous Structures Notice was issued under Sec.76 of the Building Act 1984.	The notice was issued due to concerns about the safety of loose render etc. around the windows of the front elevation. Works have been undertaken to stabilise the areas concerned.
6 Cassiobury Park	Installation of a new flue on an external wall.	Householder development.
3 Nascot Wood Road	Single storey extension and internal alterations.	Householder development.
Tamray House 146-150 St Albans Road	Installation of discharge vent to rear elevation and repainting of shopfront.	Business requirements.
107-115 The Parade	External repainting works and replacement signage.	Business requirements.
43 Park Road	Single storey side and rear extension, formation of a new basement, and other alterations.	Householder development.
6 Station Road	Change of use, new signage, a ground floor extension and other alterations.	Change of use from an office (Class E (c)) to a dental surgery (Class E(e)).

44 Cassiobury Drive	Single storey rear extension.	Householder development.
Flat 2 Merrow Grange 106 Langley Road	Replacement of sash windows.	Householder development.
99 St Albans Road	Permission for redevelopment of the former Lloyds Bank site, with the retention of the front façade, to provide a mixed-use scheme four storey extension on the roof for 14 residential units, 12 x 1-bedroom flats and 2 x 2-bedroom flats on the first to fourth floors (Class C3), and retail units (Class E uses).	Redevelopment of a vacant site.
62 - 64 High Street Watford WD17 2BT	Consent to display internally illuminated panel and new signage.	Business requirements.
146A High Street Watford WD17 2EN	Erection of first and second floors to provide one self-contained residential unit and other alterations.	Additional floors to an existing retail unit to provide a residential unit.
153 St Albans Road	Rear/side extension and rear entrance gates, and covered terrace.	Business requirements.
Town Hall & Colosseum Hempstead Road	Multiple works relating to the Town Hall and Colosseum. Details submitted for Condition 9 (Main entrance foyer roof light) pursuant to planning permission 22/01238/LBC	Decarbonisation and renovation of the buildings to improve energy efficiency and future usage of the buildings.
Cassiobury Court Richmond Drive	Erection of air conditioning unit and associated works.	Business requirements.
133 - 135 High Street	Internal alterations including part removal of party wall to connect to No.133, repainting of existing shopfront, new signage and provision of outdoor seating areas on highway	Business requirements.
2 Farm Field	Alterations to the internal and external fabric of the building, including the upgrade of building services	Householder development.
Beechen Grove Baptist Church Clarendon Road	Addition of new hardwood framed glazed entrance doors to 3 existing porches	Security enhancements.

7. A Climate Emergency

Local Plan policies have an important role in ensuring that development in Watford becomes more sustainable, environmentally friendly and that they consider aspects of climate change early in the application process. This section of the AMR reports on progress relating to climate change targets following the Council's declaration of a Climate Emergency in 2019, as well as reporting on how new developments are helping Watford to becoming carbon neutral.

Watford Local Plan

The Watford Local Plan is an important tool for implementing change and improving the Borough through new development and transformational change. All developments in the Borough should be considering both adaptation and mitigation of climate change.

The efficient management of resources is important and policies in the Local Plan seek to improve this through a variety of requirements including energy and water efficiency, carbon reduction and offsetting, overheating, the appropriate use of materials and effective waste management.

Air quality has historically been worsening nationally due to increased emissions, largely from the use of private vehicles. Watford is not immune from this and currently has two Air Quality Management Areas (AQMAs) in place which need to be monitored and improved over the plan period.

The Plan discusses issues of sustainability and climate change in multiple sections as a broad overarching theme for the Plan but also has one dedicated chapter 'Chapter 7: A Climate Emergency'. This chapter focuses on how to achieve a carbon neutral Watford, by promoting sustainable construction, producing efficient new buildings that develop in a cumulative way and how to make use of opportunities for a low carbon future.

Reducing Carbon Emissions

The Climate Change Act 2008 includes a national duty to ensure that carbon emissions in the UK in 2050 are at least 100% lower than the 1990 baseline. This covers the net amount of carbon dioxide emissions and net UK emissions for each of the other targeted greenhouse gases for the year.

Watford Borough Council declared a climate emergency in 2019 and has since prioritised the reduction of carbon among other climate and ecological improvements. The Local Plan is an important part of the Council's response to the climate emergency.

The reduction in carbon emissions is important to monitor as a way of assessing progress towards the carbon neutral target put in place by the Council as part of its declaration of a climate emergency. This information is taken from UK local authority and regional carbon dioxide emissions national statistics which publish new results every year in June. The data is however produced approximately two years after the data is collected so the most recent data available at this time is referring to data collected in 2020. The data includes exclusively carbon dioxide emissions and is measured in kilotonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent (kt CO₂e).

The 2019 baseline is 333 kt CO₂e. This is the figure against which future year's data in Table 45 will be measured. The 2019 baseline reflects the year which the Council declared a Climate Emergency and committed to taking more action to reduce carbon emissions in the Borough.

Table 45: The level of carbon reduction since 2019

	2021/2022	2022/2023	2023/2024	2024/2025	2025/2026
Percentage of carbon reduction since 2019 (kt CO2e)	-11.7%	-7.5%	-12.7%		

What Happened?:

Over the monitoring year, there is a reported net decrease in carbon dioxide emissions of 12.7% when compared to the 2019 baseline. This means there was a reduction of 57 kilotonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent reported this year, from 417.kt CO2e to 360.3kt CO2e.

The most significant reduction was in transport (40%), with our current transport emissions being similar to those during the pandemic in 2020.

Comparisons:

There has been a reported reduction in carbon emissions since the 2019 baseline of 12.7% according to the above nationally produced dataset. This indicator will continue to monitor carbon emissions over the plan period to assess whether this is a long-term trend.

As mentioned above, the way the data is published means that this indicator will always have a lag, and that data presented will always apply to a period that is two years out of date.

This year the Council has amended how this indicator is reported so that it is aligned with the Council’s Environmental Strategy Annual Report 2023/2024.

Implications for the Local Plan:

The reduction in carbon emissions is in line with Policy CC8.1 and it is positive to see a reduction on the 2019 baseline figures. However, if this current rate of decrease was maintained over the plan period it would be insufficient to achieve the Council’s target to be carbon neutral by 2030.

BREEAM Standards

An important method of assessing the sustainability of non-residential buildings has been created by the British Research Establishment and is called the Environmental Assessment Method (BREEAM). This helps to ensure that non-residential developments are as energy efficient and sustainable as possible.

BREEAM is a standardised tool used to assess sustainability measures and inform stakeholders in planning developments. There are multiple levels of BREEAM that can be achieved based on established rating systems. The Local Plan requires major non-residential developments to meet

BREEAM Excellent/Very good standard and the following indicator will report the number of non-residential developments which are meeting this target.

Table 46: The number of major non-residential applications approved which are meeting BREEAM excellent or very good standard

	2021/2022	2022/2023	2023/2024	2024/2025	2025/2026	Total
Major non-residential developments which meet BREEAM excellent/very good	<i>No data available this year. Data will be reported in subsequent AMRs</i>	<i>No data available this year. Data will be reported in subsequent AMRs</i>	3 major applications granted			3

What Happened?:

There were three major, non-residential applications granted over this monitoring year, all of which achieved BREEAM Excellent/Very Good standard.

Comparisons:

This is the first year that data is available for this indicator, therefore, comparisons cannot be made.

Implications for the Local Plan:

Despite some major applications for non-residential developments being submitted prior to the adoption of the current Local Plan, all applications granted over the monitoring year are proposed to achieve BREEAM excellent or very good standards.

Carbon Emission Reduction Standards

Developments are required to individually meet carbon emission reduction standards above those specified in Part L of Building Regulations in 2013. The Local Plan requires a 19% increase above Part L regulations, but this has since been superseded with national building regulations to require 31% above Part L 2013 standards for dwellings and 27% above for other buildings which is what will be monitored in the AMR.

Table 47: Number of new residential permissions that meet carbon emission reduction standards

	2021/2022	2022/2023	2023/2024	2024/2025	2025/2026	Total
Number of new residential developments which meet carbon emission reduction standards	<i>No data available this year. Data will be reported in subsequent AMRs</i>	<i>No data available this year. Data will be reported in subsequent AMRs</i>	789*			789*

*Number of new dwellings granted on major applications

What Happened?:

Over the monitoring year, 789 dwellings were granted on major residential planning applications.

Comparisons:

This is the first monitoring year that this indicator has been report, therefore, comparisons cannot be made.

Implications for the Local Plan:

All the dwelling granted on major applications were submitted during the current Local Plan period. It is positive to see that all the major residential applications granted over the monitoring year are proposed to achieve BREEAM excellent or very good standards.

Water Efficiency

All residential developments should be meeting a technical standard of 110 litres per person, per day. This is particularly important in Watford as it is located within an area of high water stress.

This is a new standard with this Local Plan and will be monitored going forward to determine the level of compliance with this target.

Table 48: The number of new homes achieving water use standards

	2021/2022	2022/2023	2023/2024	2024/2025	2025/2026	Total
Number of homes achieving that water use standard of 110 litres per person per day	<i>No data available this year. Data will be reported in subsequent AMRs</i>	<i>No data available this year. Data will be reported in subsequent AMRs</i>	370*			370

*New homes delivered on major residential developments.

What Happened?:

The data reported this monitoring year is from residential completions on major residential applications.

Over this monitoring year, 542 dwellings were completed on major developments. 370 of those (68%) complied with the water use standards set out in Policy CC8.3 of the Local Plan.

Comparisons:

This is the first monitoring year that this indicator has been reported on, therefore, comparisons cannot be made. Should be noted that all the residential completions on major applications recorded this monitoring year were approved prior to the adoption of the Local Plan.

Implications for the Local Plan:

Affinity Water are the main provider of water in Watford and their customers on average use 150 litres per person per day (Affinity Water³) compared with the national average of 140 litres per person per day (Waterwise⁴). This is the baseline against which this indicator will be considered.

110 litres per resident per day is a new standard with this Local Plan and it is positive to report that all new homes delivered on major residential development sites are meeting this standard. This indicator will be monitored going forward to determine the level of compliance with this target.

³ <https://www.affinitywater.co.uk/saveourstreams/tips>

⁴ <https://www.waterwise.org.uk/save-water/>

Air Quality Management Areas (AQMAs)

Every local authority in the UK has been assessing air quality since 1997 and locations where national objectives are not achieved become AQMAs. At the start of the plan period Watford had two AQMAs:

- Watford AQMA 2: Vicarage Road
- Watford AQMA 3A: Aldenham Road/Chalk Hill

The Council recognises the concerns around poor air quality and has reduced the number of AQMAs from 19 in 2018 to just the two listed above. The main pollutants of interest in the Borough are nitrogen dioxide (NO₂) and particulate matter, smaller than 10mm in size (PM₁₀) which are both associated with road traffic. Decreases and improvements to air quality in these areas will occur through a shift to green transport options and increased mitigation measures. Improving air quality will mean less AQMAs will be needed in Watford.

Table 49: The number of AQMAs in place within Watford Borough

	2021/2022	2022/2023	2023/2024	2024/2025	2025/2026	Total
AQMAs in Watford	2	2	2			2

What Happened?:

Watford currently has 2 AQMAs which are being monitored, Vicarage Road and Aldenham Road/Chalk Hill.

Comparisons:

There has been no change in the AQMAs in Watford over the monitoring year.

Implications for the Local Plan:

Policy CC8.4 strives to minimise the worsening effects of poor air quality and increase standards of air quality overall. This will reduce the need for the 2 remaining AQMAs. Whilst there has been no reduction in the number of AQMAs during the monitoring year there has equally been no increase.

Improvements to air quality will be recorded over the medium to longer term and so the implications for a future Local Plan review should not be considered based on single monitoring years.

Pollution and Disturbance

Development can negatively impact adjacent land uses and future occupants if not carefully managed. New developments need to assess their impacts on neighbouring land while taking into account its use and the possible cumulative effects in accordance with the Agent of Change principle.

Management of these potential effects must be dealt with early in the planning process otherwise permissions may be refused.

Table 50: Number of applications refused on the basis of pollution or disturbance

	2021/2022	2022/2023	2023/2024	2024/2025	2025/2026	Total
Number planning permissions refused on pollution or disturbance grounds	<i>No data available this year. Data will be reported in subsequent AMRs</i>	<i>No data available this year. Data will be reported in subsequent AMRs</i>	1 major application			1

What Happened?:

Of the two major applications refused over the monitoring year, one had policy CC8.5 (Managing the Impacts of Development) listed as a reason for refusal. The application that was refused with policy CC8.5 listed as a reason for refusal was at Wellstones Car Park (22/01226/FULM) due to the impact on surrounding buildings.

Comparisons:

This is the first year that this indicator is being reported, therefore comparisons are not able to be made.

Implications for the Local Plan:

Policy CC8.5 strives for development to be designed to protect the amenity of adjacent land uses and their occupants and local amenity. This includes mitigating impacts on light pollution, noise pollution, contamination, odour, unstable land and power lines.

8. Natural Environment

Watford Borough Council recognises the importance of the natural environment and has declared an ecological and climate emergency to try and prevent any losses to it.

Through the monitoring of any improvements to green and blue infrastructure, and the statutory requirement for a net gain in biodiversity from new development, Watford hopes to strengthen and enhance its natural environment for current and future generations, and for the Borough's wildlife and habitats.

Watford Local Plan

Watford is blessed with many important natural environment features that are important to the residents and biodiversity in the Borough. The Plan seeks to improve biodiversity and protect existing open spaces and green infrastructure to ensure that this is preserved.

This section of the AMR will report any gains and losses in green infrastructure and open space over the monitoring year, and the number of applications that provide a sufficient net gain in biodiversity. It will also record any applications which the Council has approved in spite of an outstanding Environment Agency objection.

Consistency with Environment Agency Advice

The Environment Agency (EA) have policies and advice covering a variety of topics around environmental protection. The EA is consulted on all major development proposals and any applications on sites that have specific environmental risks. They also have authority over all major rivers in the UK, which includes the River Colne.

In Watford, the EA is largely consulted on issues of flood risk. Each year the Environment Agency produce a spreadsheet of all applications they have objected to on flood risk and water quality grounds and whether their advice was followed.

Table 50 highlights levels of compliancy with EA advice as per this published data. There is a target in the Local Plan for there to be no applications approved contrary to EA advice on flooding or water quality grounds.

Table 51: The number of applications approved over the monitoring year that was contrary to advice from the Environment Agency

	2021/2022	2022/2023	2023/2024	2024/2025	2025/2026	Total
Number of applications granted planning permission contrary to Environment Agency advice	0	0	0			0

[Environment Agency objections to planning applications based on flood risk and water quality - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk)

What Happened?:

Over the monitoring year, one application in Watford was objected to by the Environment Agency based on flood risk. Following a review of the supplementary information provided with the application, the Environment Agency removed their objection, and the application was subsequently granted.

Comparisons:

During the Local Plan period, no permissions have been granted contrary to Environment Agency advice.

Implications for the Local Plan:

This indicator will report these figures each year to determine whether the Local Plan policies relating to the natural environment are preventing development seen as unacceptable by the Environment Agency from being approved.

Open Space/Green Infrastructure

Having access to green spaces such as parks, public gardens, play spaces, allotments and sports facilities is highly beneficial to the health and wellbeing of a community as well as having considerable environmental benefits. Watford has a good amount of greenspace and a considerable number of high-quality open spaces but needs to work towards creating a more robust Green Infrastructure Network.

There are a large number of areas designated in the Local Plan which protects green infrastructure and open space from loss or development.

Within the newly adopted Local Plan there are 614 hectares of land designated as green infrastructure or open space, ranging from large areas of regional significance like Cassiobury Park to small amenity spaces of local importance. These are all provided policy protection against their loss.

New developments can establish new areas of open space onsite or make off-site contributions towards its provision. They can also help to enhance and improve connectivity between green spaces by creating linkages between sites. The target is to ensure that there is no net loss in open space or green infrastructure, but seeing a gain would be preferable particularly to ensure that there is adequate provision to support new development being delivered in the Borough.

A broad assessment has been undertaken to record which major developments in the Borough have been completed with open space included. It has not been possible to gather exact sizes of these over the monitoring year and so it is just provided as a written commentary.

Table 52: Gains and losses in designated open space and green infrastructure (sqm)

	2021/2022	2022/2023	2023/2024	2024/2025	2025/2026	Total
Developments with gains to Open/Amenity space and Green Space	<i>See summary in the box below</i>	<i>See summary in the box below</i>	<i>See summary in the box below</i>			-

What Happened?:

The baseline figure for this indicator is 614 hectares which was the amount of designated open space and green infrastructure in the Local Plan. The sites making up this existing provision are shown on the policies map.

Over the monitoring year, there have been multiple park improvement projects that seek to enhance the quality of open spaces in Watford, some of these have been reported in Chapter 4. These however do not increase the size of the open space or green infrastructure.

There were four major residential developments totally completed over the monitoring year, three of which included some form of amenity space or green infrastructure on-site. It is important to note that all the residential completions on major applications were granted prior to the adoption of the current Local Plan.

Whilst many developments included soft and hard landscaping features, they are not considered to be new open space or green infrastructure.

Comparisons:

A similar update was provided last year where there were 7 major applications completed, all of which had some form of open/amenity space. This year had fewer residential completions on major developments.

Implications for the Local Plan:

Access to sufficient open space is a key part of achieving sustainable development and in improving the physical and mental health and wellbeing of the residents that occupy new and existing development. It is therefore important to monitor this indicator to ensure sufficient provision is being made.

The new Local Plan policies should strengthen the ability of the council to require sufficient amounts of open space as part of developments in future years.

Net gain in Biodiversity

Watford Borough Council declared an Ecological Emergency in early 2021 and has committed to increasing existing, and providing new, areas of biodiversity in the Borough. Any sustained loss of green infrastructure and the fracturing of its networks can have a damaging effect on habitats.

The new Environment Act (2021) includes means to strengthen biodiversity. Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) became mandatory on 12th February 2024 for major developments and mandatory for small sites on 2nd April 2024. Developers must deliver a BNG of 10%. This means a development will result in more or better quality natural habitat than there was before development. Some developments are exempt from BNG requirements.

Table 53: Number of applications which have delivered a net gain in Biodiversity as per the DEFRA metric

	2021/2022	2022/2023	2023/2024	2024/2025	2025/2026	Total
Biodiversity Net Gain as per DEFRA biodiversity metric	<i>No data available this year. Data will be reported in subsequent AMRs</i>	<i>No data available this year. Data will be reported in subsequent AMRs</i>	1			1

What Happened?:

One development that was granted since Local Plan adoption and completed within the current MY delivered a biodiversity net gain of 31.04%. There are permissions that have been granted permission which aim to provide at least a 10% gain in biodiversity. These applications will be reported on at completion.

Comparisons:

This is the first year that this indicator has been reported on. Comparisons will be made in future AMRs.

Implications for the Local Plan:

All applications submitted after the adoption of the Local Plan in October 2022 need to include a 10% net gain of biodiversity. Biodiversity Net Gain was made a statutory requirement for major developments during the monitoring year and on 2nd April 2024 for small sites. Most applications that were completed over the monitoring year were granted prior to Local Plan adoption and all were granted prior to the introduction of Statutory Biodiversity Net Gain.

9. Infrastructure

New development must be supported by sufficient and appropriate infrastructure in order to create high quality, sustainable places.

Infrastructure falls into three categories:

- Social infrastructure: Schools, healthcare, community facilities, leisure and cultural centres, places of worship and emergency services.
- Physical infrastructure: Roads, footpaths, cycleways, water provision and treatment, sewerage, flood prevention and drainage, waste disposal, electricity, gas and electronic communications networks.
- Green Infrastructure: Open spaces, recreation facilities, trees, green corridors, wildlife corridors and landscape features.

Figure 7 below replicates Figure 10.1 of the Local Plan setting out all the different types of infrastructure that will be subject to assessment in this section of the AMR.

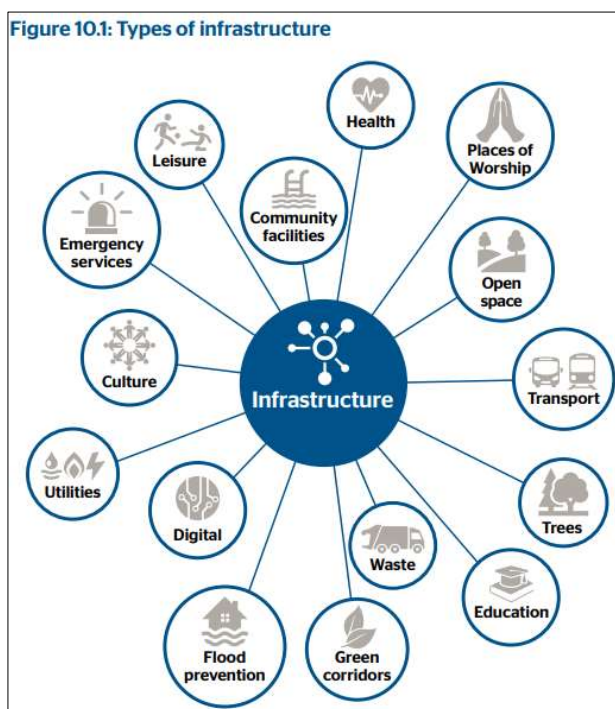


Figure 7 - Types of Infrastructure

Infrastructure Delivery Plan (IDP)

Details of the infrastructure requirements in the Local Plan to support the planned increase in new homes, businesses and other facilities are found in the IDP⁵. The IDP identifies essential infrastructure projects and prioritises them according to their importance, as well as providing indicative costs and timescales.

The IDP includes strategic level infrastructure such as health facilities, education facilities, sustainable transport projects and communication infrastructure as well as more locally specific infrastructure projects.

Table 54 reports on the delivery of projects referenced in the IDP over the monitoring year.

⁵ [Microsoft Word - 2021 WBC Infrastructure Delivery Plan \(usfiles.com\)](#)

Table 54: Progress on infrastructure projects over the monitoring year

IDP section	Name of project	Progress 2023/24
7.1	20mph speed limit	HCC consulted on proposals to introduce 20mph zones in West Watford and Cassiobury Park Triangle. Sufficient support was not achieved.
7.1	Exchange Road cycle link	Feasibility work is ongoing through a ring road crossing study.
7.1	Watford Ring – Road gateway junction enhancements	Town Centre Framework considered high level proposals for junction improvements that were supported during consultation. Feasibility work is ongoing through a ring road crossing study.
7.1	Route 1: Cycling gap analysis (Hempstead Road)	LCWIP route 17 has been through Project validation with next steps to take northern sections through Feasibility. S106 funding has been secured towards this project.
7.1	Lower High Street shared use cycle path	Project validation is completed and is being considered as part of plans to bring forward the Sustainable Transport Hub.
7.1	Safety Scheme 2: Waterfields Way/ Lower High Street	Detailed designs are being produced as part of the Green Loop work.
7.2	2f.e. primary school at Watford Gateway SDA (MU05 St Albans Road)	Development commenced, new primary school to be delivered in phase 2, forecast start date Q1 2026, forecast completion date Q2 2027.
7.4	Colne Valley Linear Park	Ongoing programme of improvements.
7.5	Crematorium	A new 'West Herts crematorium' began in March 2022 as a sister site for the existing site in Garston. This is located outside of Watford Borough boundary in Hemel Hempstead but provides additional capacity for the whole of SW Herts. The building has been completed and open days were held in August 2023 with a full opening expected during the 2023-2024 monitoring year.

What Happened?:

A range of projects were progressed over the monitoring year. They were mostly feasibility and scoping work on transport improvement projects. The Green Loop active travel, around the town centre, was launched.

Comparisons:

It is the intention that projects in the IDP are progressed over the plan period. This year a considerable number of projects have made some progress albeit not many have resulted in physical works at this stage.

Implications for the Local Plan:

Infrastructure provision is essential to support development. Due to the nature of scoping, costing and delivery, projects are phased over a period of several years. Feasibility and design work is essential to the success of funding bids.

It will be important to monitor the timely delivery of infrastructure projects over the plan period to ensure that new development is supported by the timely and sufficient delivery of infrastructure.

Developer Contributions

There are various methods the Council can use to fund infrastructure projects, many of which involve securing funding through developer contributions as a way of mitigating the impacts of new development.

Developer contributions can take various forms:

- Securing appropriate on-site enabling and development works.
- Charging the Community Infrastructure Levy on developments as required by any charging schedules in operation for the area within which the development is located;
- Securing Section 106 Agreements to provide affordable housing and make provisions to mitigate the impacts of the development where necessary, or appropriate, having regard to any relevant supplementary planning documents or guidance;
- Securing off-site highway works where necessary;

The Council will primarily use Section 106 Agreements and Community Infrastructure Levy payments to secure appropriate contributions from developments for affordable housing and pieces of infrastructure, such as new schools and transport network improvements.

Table 55 will report the amount of contributions secured through s106 or CIL payments over the monitoring year. This information is a summary of the headline figures that are set out in more detail in the latest Infrastructure Funding Statement that was published by the Council in July 2024 and covers the same period as this AMR⁶.

Table 55: Amount of developer contribution collected through s106 and CIL over the monitoring year (£)

Type of contribution	2021/2022 (£)	2022/2023 (£)	2023/2024 (£)	2024/2025 (£)	2025/2026 (£)	Total (£)
CIL	£1,266,825 ⁷	£2,786,962	£2,592,831			£6,646,618
S106	£154,542	£1,971,918	£475,166			£2,601,626
Total (£)	£1,421,367	£4,758,880	£3,067,997			£9,248,244

⁶ Infrastructure Funding Statement 2023-2024:

<https://www.watford.gov.uk/downloads/file/2323/infrastructure-funding-statement-report-2023-24>

⁷ Note that this figure has been slightly revised to that which was published in the 2021/2022 AMR. This is to ensure full consistency with the published Infrastructure Funding Statement.

What Happened?:

Over the monitoring year £2,592,831 was collected through CIL payments towards infrastructure projects.

In addition to the above CIL receipts, the Council received £475,166 in s106 contributions over the monitoring year. This was largely contributions towards affordable housing, with smaller contributions towards public realm improvements, street trees and controlled parking zones. The Council spent a total of £156,297 of s106 contributions over the monitoring year. CIL spend towards Breakspear School relocation was secured. Further detail on CIL and S106 collection and spend is reported in the Council's Infrastructure Funding Statement.

Comparisons:

The following table provides a comparison between the CIL contributions received this year compared to previous years. There has been a general upward trend in the amount of CIL contribution received since 2018. Overall, the amount of CIL and s106 contribution has increased this year compared to last.

Year	Amount CIL collected
2015/16	£160,275
2016/17	£421,060
2017/18	£762,986
2018/19	£1,442,328
2019/20	£3,270,390
2020/21	£3,029,271
2021/22	£1,266,825
2022/23	£2,786,962
2023/24	£2,592,831

The annual delivery of CIL contributions will vary based upon the sites that are developed, existing floorspace, and levels of affordable housing contribution. Areas around Riverwell and the Hospital, Watford Junction and Ascot Road are £0 rated and so any development in these areas will not receive any CIL contributions.

The annual delivery of CIL and any other relevant developer contributions will be reported in the Council's Infrastructure Funding Statement and summarised here over the plan period.

Implications for the Local Plan:

The collection and use of developer contributions through CIL and s106 can ensure that appropriate infrastructure comes forward to support the scale of development anticipated in the Local Plan. The delivery of infrastructure helps to ensure the delivery of sustainable development.

This indicator will highlight the availability of funds to deliver infrastructure and whether development is contributing sufficiently to the infrastructure needs of the Borough.

10. A Sustainable Travel Town

The Council are aiming to make Watford a Sustainable Travel Town by incorporating the features in Figure 8 below, which is replicated from Figure 11.2 of the Local Plan.

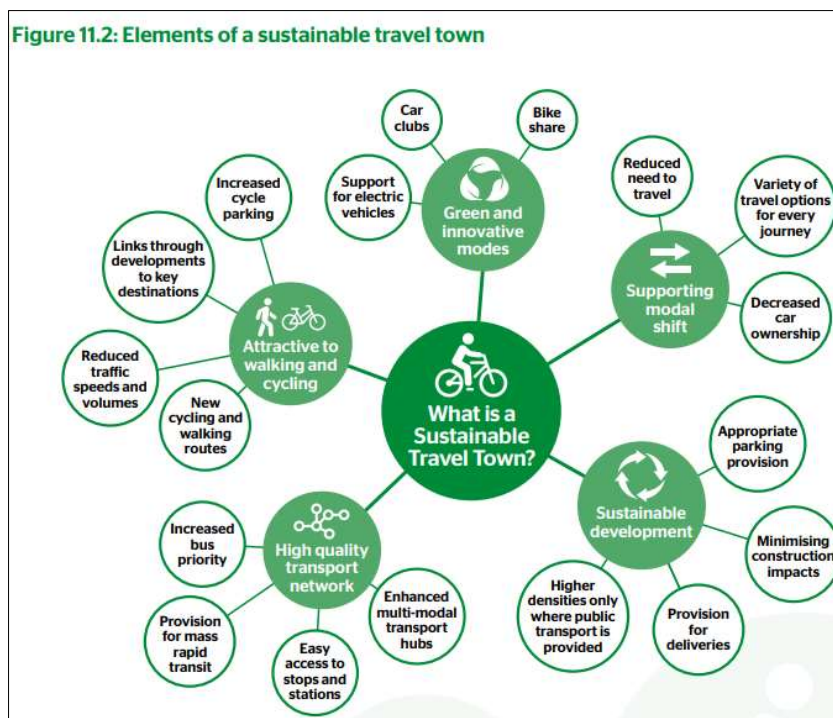


Figure 8 - Elements of a Sustainable Travel Town

Watford's compact urban form gives it significant potential to achieve these aims especially through encouraging and prioritising walking, cycling and public transport use and moving away from car dependence.

The conversion into a Sustainable Travel Town will involve changing the perceptions and priorities of all highway users so that cyclists and pedestrians have priority over cars.

The majority of new development will take place within the Core Development Area, where there is high accessibility to public transport and where key services and facilities are accessible by walking and cycling.

Sustainable Travel Town

Policy ST11.1 sets out the criteria and principles that development should meet when contributing towards promoting sustainable and active travel behaviour. Proximity to sustainable transport options is a key part of this.

As such this indicator assesses the amount of new residential development that is located within walking distance (400m) of an active bus stop or train station and therefore provides easy and convenient access to sustainable transport options.

Table 56: % of new residential development that is located within 400m of a bus stop or railway station

	2021/2022	2022/2023	2023/2024	2024/2025	2025/2026	Total
% of new development within 400m of a bus stop	100%	88%	99%			96%
% of new development within 400m of a railway station	29%	12%	4%			15%

What Happened?:

745 of the 751 net residential units completed over the monitoring year were within 400m of a bus stop. This equates to 53 out of 54 applications, or 99% of applications. There was one application for 6 dwellings that was 480m away from the nearest bus stop.

4% of applications (7 out of 54) recording net residential completions over the monitoring year were within 400m of one of the six railway stations located within Watford Borough⁸.

Comparisons:

The method used to calculate these figures is the same as 2021/22 but a different method to last year. Therefore, comparison can be made between 2021/22 and this monitoring year.

There was a decrease in the number of dwellings within 400m of a rail station and/or bus stop. This is largely due to a higher proportion of completions being outside the Core Development Area, such as the Ex-Mothercare site which was approved under permitted development rights and the Laundry Works development on Sydney Road which is a 15-minute walk from Watford Underground station (1.1km).

⁸ Note that this includes Watford Underground station on the Metropolitan Line.

Implications for the Local Plan:

It is positive to see a high proportion of new residential development providing opportunities for public transport use through having walkable access to a bus stop. This should help new development contribute effectively towards modal shift and encourage more sustainable transport usage across the Borough.

Due to the higher proportion of completions outside the Core Development Area this year, the percentage of completions within 400m of a railway station has decreased compared to last year. However, it is likely that the Plan's allocating of sites within the Core Development Area will increase the proportion of new development located within 400m of a railway station over the plan period.

Safeguarded Transport Routes

Policy ST11.2 of the Local Plan safeguards several transport routes (listed in Table 57) for incorporation into future mass transit, bus prioritisation or walking and cycling routes.

These are safeguarded to ensure that designs do not compromise the prioritisation of public transport or active travel now or in the future.

The Policy also safeguards the role of Watford Junction as a multi modal hub, preventing development that would hinder the provision of key infrastructure that would support this.

This indicator will report any changes or updates in relation to these safeguarded routes that have taken place over the monitoring year.

Table 57: Annual updates on safeguarded transport routes

Safeguarded routes	2022/2023- Any updates
Disused Croxley Rail Line	None
Ebury Way cycle path	A part of new Watford Green Loop proposals (see below)
Abbey Line	None
Existing and Planned cycle routes in the Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan	Engagement on the Watford Green Loop, which is a 10K (6.5 miles) continuous cycle route around the town that incorporates part of Ebury Way and Riverside Park was undertaken, and it will be formally launched over the 24/25 monitoring year.
Any future planned mass rapid transport routes identified by the county council	None
Watford Junction	None

What Happened?:

Plans to develop the Watford Green Loop were progressed over the monitoring year. The Council will continue to work with residents, Hertfordshire County Council and cycling organisations to develop these proposals, with a formal launch being made over the 24/25 monitoring year. The 10km route connects key locations, open spaces and heritage sites, using the National Cycle Route 6, Ebury Way and a joined-up network of cycle paths.

The route will provide an eco-friendly alternative to driving, and to support users, a flyer, map, cue sheet and GPS route planner will be developed. Following the formal launch there will be further follow up work to enhance the Green Loop through the addition of new cycle ways, resurfacing of existing paths and improved signage for cyclists and pedestrians.

Implications for the Local Plan:

Policy ST11.2 of the Local Plan safeguards several transport routes. As it is still only two years since the adoption of the Local Plan, this is the first year that updates have been reported on any of the safeguarded transport routes. The council will continue to work with residents, Hertfordshire County Council and local organisations to continue safeguarding the transport routes, preventing development that would hinder the provision of key infrastructure that would support this.

Walking and Cycling Infrastructure

Policy ST11.4 states that developments need to demonstrate that they have sought to prioritise walking and cycling through the delivery of on-site infrastructure, wayfinding measures and a safe and secure design. The overall objective of the Plan is to reduce car use by increasing the convenience and attractiveness of walking and cycling.

Appendix D of the Local Plan sets out the standards for on-site cycle parking that all new development will be expected to meet.

Table 58 will report the number of applications that have been approved with levels of cycling parking provision in accordance with Appendix D of the Local Plan.

Table 58: Number of applications approved with policy compliant cycle parking provisions

	2021/2022	2022/2023	2023/2024	2024/2025	2025/2026	Total
Number of applications with policy compliant cycle parking	<i>No data available this year. Data will be reported in subsequent AMRs</i>	<i>No data available this year. Data will be reported in subsequent AMRs</i>	26			26
% of all new development with policy compliant cycle parking	<i>No data available this year. Data will be reported in subsequent AMRs</i>	<i>No data available this year. Data will be reported in subsequent AMRs</i>	96%			96%

What Happened?:

27 applications were required to provide policy compliant cycle parking, 26 applications provided this adequately. It is positive to see that a large majority of all applications granted have policy compliant cycle parking.

Comparisons:

This is the first year that data has been reported for this indicator. Therefore, comparisons cannot be made.

Implications for the Local Plan:

This indicator will continue to be monitored to assess the compliance rate of policy ST11.4 and report the progress made towards the overall objective of the Plan is to reduce car use by increasing the convenience and attractiveness of walking and cycling.

Sustainable Transport Usage in Watford

Hertfordshire County Council produce a travel survey every 3 years, which provides data on how many people are walking and cycling for their main mode of transport, compared to car use. Table 60 records the latest results of this survey. The objective is to increase the percentage of people mainly using cycling or walking over the plan period. The latest available data comes from the Hertfordshire County Council (HCC) Travel Survey published in December 2022.

Table 59: The % of people walking or cycling for their main mode of transport

	2021/2022	2022/2023	2023/2024	2024/2025	2025/2026	Total
% of people walking for main transport	32%	No additional update	No additional update			32%
% of people cycling for transport	3.7%	No additional update	No additional update			3.7%

What Happened?:

32% of people use walking as their main method of transport in Watford, and 3.7% of people use cycling as their main method of transport. This data is taken from the 2022 HCC travel survey published in December 2022. It remains the most up to date data available for this indicator.

Comparisons:

There was no update to the published information in the 2022 HCC Travel Survey. The below analysis is replicated from the 2021/2022 AMR.

In comparison with other districts in Hertfordshire, Watford has the highest levels of walking and cycling recorded as being the main method of transport.

The use of cars is still marginally higher than walking in Watford with 35.5% of people using cars as their main method of transport compared to 32% walking.

Implications for the Local Plan:

Achieving significant modal shifts in transport will take time to occur across the plan period, but it is encouraging to see Watford's position relative to the rest of Hertfordshire regarding the use of walking and cycling as the main form of transport.

The locating of 80% of new residential and mixed-use allocations within the Core Development Area should increase the attractiveness and viability of walking and cycling as a main transport option. In trying to increase walking and cycling, it will also be important to provide safe and accessible routes to and from key locations, and good quality infrastructure such as cycle parking opportunities, particularly in the town centre and at major transport hubs.

Electric Vehicle Ownership and Infrastructure

Policy ST11.5 supports the increased provision of electric vehicle charging infrastructure. It states that 20% of all new parking spaces should have active charging infrastructure and all spaces should have passive provision. The provision of electric charging infrastructure should make electric vehicles a more viable option for a wider range of people and should drive up levels of ownership in the Borough over the plan period.

Standard car parking should be provided in accordance with Appendix E of the Local Plan with all development in the Core Development Area being 'car-lite'.

The following indicators seek to track the level of electric vehicle ownership in the Borough as a percentage of total car ownership, the number of new electric charging infrastructure being delivered and lastly the level of car ownership generally across the Borough.

Table 60: Ownership of Ultra-Low emission vehicles as a % of total car ownership

	2021/2022	2022/2023	2023/2024	2024/2025	2025/2026
Number of Ultra-low emission vehicles registered in Watford	2,125	2,204	4,619		
% of all car registrations in the Borough that are Ultra-low emission.	4%	5%	10%		

[Vehicle licensing statistics data tables - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/vehicle-licensing-statistics-data-tables)

What Happened?:

There were 4,619 electric or ultra-low emission vehicles registered over the monitoring year.

In total there were 45,700 vehicles registered in Watford at the end of the 2023/2024 monitoring year. Electric vehicle registrations have equated to 10% of all vehicle registrations over the monitoring year.

Comparisons:

Over the 2022-2023 monitoring year, there were 2,204 electric or ultra-low emission vehicle registrations in the Borough and so the 2023-2024 figure of 4,619 demonstrates a clear and rising demand for electric vehicles.

In terms of comparing the ownership of electric vehicles against the total number of registered vehicles in the Borough, the above table shows that the electric vehicle registrations for this monitoring year (4,619) would represent 10% of the total vehicle registration figure. This is a reasonably significant increase over the first two years of the plan period.

Implications for the Local Plan:

This indicator assesses the demand for electric vehicles in Watford and in turn provide evidence as to whether there is more demand for associated infrastructure in the Borough that could be given further encouragement in Local Plan policy.

Table 61: Electric vehicle charging spaces delivered over the monitoring year

	2021/2022	2022/2023	2023/2024	2024/2025	2025/2026	Total
Number of electric vehicle charging spaces delivered on new developments in Watford	95	2,061	387			2,543
Number of electric vehicle charging spaces provided by the Council	34	79*	72			185

What Happened?:

There was a total of 387 electric vehicle spaces granted on new development sites over the monitoring year.

These were provided as part of the following applications:

Permission Reference	Electric Vehicle Charge Points provided
22/01486/FULM	2
22/01091/FULM	14
23/00023/FUL	1
23/00324/REM	8
23/00300/FUL	2
22/01481/VARM	29
23/00862/FUL	7
23/00462/FUL	3
23/00626/FULM	2
21/00765/OUTM	290
23/00980/FUL	16
23/00765/FUL	3
22/00958/FULM	10
Total:	387

290 of these spaces were provided as part of the expansion to Watford General Hospital.

In addition to spaces delivered as a result of new development, the Council have introduced a further 72 twin 7Kw electric charging points for residents' use.

There will be a further 53 lamp column sites to delivered during 2024-25 and 29 more 7Kw twin electric charge points. This followed a successful bid to the On-Street Residential Charge Point Scheme (ORCS) which has provided the funding for this.

It is positive to see electric vehicle spaces being delivered in the Borough and this indicator will continue to monitor the quantum of this provision.

Comparisons:

It is clear that in total, there was a considerably higher net delivery of electric vehicle charging points in the previous monitoring year compared to this year. However, this was largely down to the Warner Brothers studio which has delivered a very large number of passive and active charging points and is a cross-boundary development with Three Rivers.

The Council is continuing to increase its direct provision of on-street electric charging points as demonstrated by the number currently being installed through the ORCS.

Implications for the Local Plan:

It is important that the Local Plan policies allow the demand for electric vehicle charging to be supported by sufficient charging infrastructure.

The above indicators relating to electric vehicle registrations will be used to give an indication of demand and this should provide a useful measure of the extent to which this need is being met on new development sites and in the Borough generally.

The requirement in Building Regulations to provide active and passive electric charging infrastructure should increase the proportion of new development that includes electric vehicle spaces. This may also have an impact on the development of related Local Plan policies going forward.

Car Ownership

The policies in the Plan seek to move people towards more active travel modes and away from using private cars. The locating of the majority of development within the Core Development Area should enable people to choose to live in Watford and not own a private vehicle because there will be ready access to services, facilities and public transport by walking and cycling.

This indicator will assess the level of car ownership in Watford, allowing the Council to assess trends that could indicate the increased viability and attractiveness of active travel.

Over the 22/23 monitoring year, the 2021 Census data on car ownership was published⁹. This data is replaced the information from the 2011 Census and remains the most up to date information and so is replicated in this year's report.

What Happened?:

There were 30,744 cars owned in Watford according to the 2021 Census data.

Comparisons:

There were 44,028 cars owned in Watford according to the 2011 Census compared to the 30,744 cars owned in the 2021 Census. This is a reduction in levels of car ownership of 30% between 2011 and 2021.

This is a positive trend with regard to modal shift and sustainability. It provides a demonstration of the potential for Watford to become less dependent on cars over the plan period.

Implications for the Local Plan:

The Local Plan seeks to make Watford a 'Sustainable Travel Town', directing the majority of growth towards the most sustainable locations close to services, facilities and public transport and prioritising the needs of active transport (pedestrians, cyclists and public transport) over cars.

The Plan supports development that is 'car-lite' or 'car-free' within the Core Development Area. It will be interesting to assess whether this has an impact on levels of car ownership over the plan period.

It is anticipated that the need for cars as part of new development in the Borough will reduce as new infrastructure initiatives to support active transport are delivered. Looking at the updated 2021 Census data in comparison to 2011 it would appear that this process has already started within Watford.

Reducing the level of reliance on private car ownership could provide opportunities for more pedestrianisation schemes and reducing road widths where appropriate could contribute towards making Watford more pedestrian friendly and reducing the perceived priority of cars in the town.

Travel Plans

Travel plans are required to support a planning application in all cases where a transport assessment would be required and where local circumstances set out in the Hertfordshire County Council Travel Plan Guidance document dictate that one is required. The Travel Plan should encourage sustainable travel behaviour and should include clear objectives and measures to achieve it.

⁹ [Car or van availability - Office for National Statistics \(ons.gov.uk\)](https://ons.gov.uk)

The following indicator records the number and percentage of applications which include a travel plan that was submitted as a supporting document, either in a standalone format or within another, larger document such as the Design and Access Statement.

Table 62: % of applications that include a Travel Plan

	2021/2022	2022/2023	2023/2024	2024/2025	2025/2026	Total
Number of applications including a Travel Plan	<i>No data available this year. Data will be reported in subsequent AMRs</i>	<i>No data available this year. Data will be reported in subsequent AMRs</i>	7 major applications			7 major applications
% of all applications that include a Travel Plan	<i>No data available this year. Data will be reported in subsequent AMRs</i>	<i>No data available this year. Data will be reported in subsequent AMRs</i>	100% of all major applications			100% of all major applications

What Happened?:

Data is only available for major applications granted over the monitoring year. There were four residential and three commercial major applications granted this monitoring year, all of which included a submission of a Travel Plan, either as a stand-alone document or within a Design and Access statement.

Comparisons:

This is the first monitoring year where data is available for this indicator, therefore, comparisons cannot be made.

Implications for the Local Plan:

The policies in the Plan seek to move people towards more active travel modes and away from using private cars. By including a Travel Plan at the planning application stage, an assessment can be made on how the development will encourage sustainable travel behaviour and should include clear objectives and measures to achieve it.

The provision of Travel Plans on 100% of major developments is positive to see and demonstrates a high level of compliance with the Local Plan policy.

11. A Healthy Community

The design of new development and the provision of suitable outdoor spaces can have a significant effect on people’s health and wellbeing. The Local Plan seeks to create a healthy, active population by ensuring sufficient access to open spaces, creating pedestrian and cycle friendly environments, limiting pollution, providing homes to meet the needs of specific sections of society such as older residents and supporting well located and good quality community facilities.

Figure 12.1 of the Local Plan is replicated below highlighting the factors that can contribute towards health and wellbeing. Many of these factors are reported on in other sections of this AMR.

Health Impact Assessments

The Local Plan seeks to ensure that development does not have a detrimental impact on the health of a population or health inequalities.

A Health Impact Assessment (HIA) is essential to demonstrate that a proposal would not have a negative impact on physical health or mental wellbeing.

Health Impact Assessments are a tool through which development can:

- Understand local community health needs and demonstrate how it can support these;
- Demonstrate how it has considered health inequalities;
- Meet the requirements of the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Regulations for human health;
- Meets the policy requirements of the Watford Local Plan that major development proposals undertake a Health Impact Assessment;
- Demonstrate the opportunities of a proposal and how a development has been positively planned.

Policy HC12.2 sets out what type of applications require a HIA to be completed, these are;

- Major residential developments of 100 units or more
- Major transport infrastructure
- Any other locally or nationally significant infrastructure project

Table 63 records the number of HIAs completed on relevant schemes over the monitoring year.

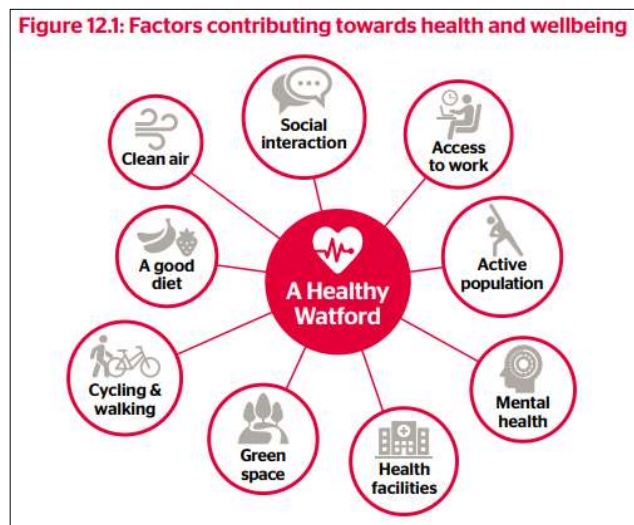


Figure 9: Factors contributing towards health and wellbeing

Table 63: Number of HIAs completed for new applications over the monitoring year

Type of development	2021/2022	2022/2023	2023/2024	2024/2025	2025/2026	Total
Residential development over 100 dwellings	<i>No data available this year. Data will be reported in subsequent AMRs</i>	<i>No data available this year. Data will be reported in subsequent AMRs</i>	4			4
Major transport infrastructure improvements	<i>No data available this year. Data will be reported in subsequent AMRs</i>	<i>No data available this year. Data will be reported in subsequent AMRs</i>	None			0
Any other locally or nationally significant infrastructure	<i>No data available this year. Data will be reported in subsequent AMRs</i>	<i>No data available this year. Data will be reported in subsequent AMRs</i>	None			0
Total			4			4

What Happened?:

There were four applications for major residential developments for over 100 dwellings submitted over the monitoring year. All of those submitted included a Health Impact Assessment as part of the application, in line with validation requirements.

Comparisons:

This is the first year this data is available, therefore, comparison is not possible.

Implications for the Local Plan:

The requirement for Health Impact Assessments to be submitted for the types of applications listed in Table 63 is a new requirement adopted through the Local Plan. Therefore, it will take a few years for applications to be submitted and then completed post local plan adoption.

Of the four HIAs submitted, they all included details on public benefit, air and noise pollution, mitigate harm as a result of the construction phase as well as consider the longer-term impact of the development. It is positive to see the level of compliance with this requirement this year as a direct impact of the Local Plan policy.

New Community Facilities

Facilities providing opportunities for leisure, recreation, sport and tourism are vital for the health and wellbeing of a population. These facilities should be located close to where people live and in the heart of communities.

Built cultural or community facilities can include education and health facilities, public houses, local places of worship, community centres, public halls, leisure and sports centres, or arts buildings.

Policy HC12.3 support the delivery of new, extended or improved cultural and community facilities, where they are located in sustainable and accessible locations and where they do not conflict with existing uses. The Policy resists the loss of existing facilities unless it is demonstrated that the facility is no longer needed; it is being provided to a higher quality; and that the facility has been vacant for 12 months with clear marketing evidence showing it could not have any community use.

Table 64 reports on the provision of new, and the loss of existing, community facilities. There is a target of no net loss of community facilities over the plan period.

Table 64: New community facilities delivered over the monitoring year

Type of Facility	Location/Name of facility
Sports facilities	MUGA pitch (1,008 sqm), new cricket nets, multi-purpose fitness studio (150 sqm) and reprovision of function room – West Herts Sports Club (19/00366/FULM)
Leisure facilities	Mayfield Club is a part of the Riverwell Development that has been completed this year. It has gym, spa and health club facilities that are open for the public to become members.

What Happened?:

There was a mixture of sports and community facilities provided as part of the mixed-use scheme at West Herts Sports Club Watford, alongside 23 residential dwellings. There was a loss of a function room, but this facility was reinstated following the demolition of the existing function room. The replacement function room is however, 35sqm smaller.

Comparisons:

There was a Community Hall delivered last year at the Centrepont Community Centre on Raphael Drive. Similarly to the facilities provided this year, this was a reprovision of existing community facilities that are being refurbished and/or extended.

Implications for the Local Plan:

There is no set target for the delivery of community facilities in the Borough over the plan period, other than there being a requirement for no net loss, but it is important that provision is supported when it comes forward. It is likely that most of the community facilities delivered over the plan period will be linked to new development, or refurbishment or expansion of existing facilities.

Loss of Community Facilities

This indicator reports on any community facilities that have been lost over the monitoring year and gives a reason as to why the facility was lost with reference to the criteria in Policy HC12.3 (e.g. replacement facility being provided, vacant for over 12 months, not needed by the community).

Table 66: Number of community facilities lost over the monitoring year

Type of Facility	Location/Name of facility	Reasons for loss
Function Hall	West Herts Sports Club	Demolition of the existing ground floor function hall and the erection of a first-floor extension over the bar/lounge to provide a new function hall (net loss of 35sqm of function hall space).
Medical Centre	3 George Street	Change of use from office (953sqm) and medical use (217sqm) to police station (Sui Generis) (1,168sqm).

What Happened?:

There was a loss of a function room as part of the mixed-use scheme at West Herts Sports Club that was mentioned in Table 65 of this report. However, this facility was reinstated. The replacement function room facility is however 35sqm smaller.

There was also the loss of a medical centre within the Town Centre which has been converted into a police station.

Comparisons:

There was similarly no net loss of community facilities over the last monitoring year, and it is positive to see this trend continuing.

However, it should be noted that the community facility that was lost within the town centre was small in scale (net total of 217 sqm) and facilitated the development of a police station.

Implications for the Local Plan:

The protection of community facilities is supported by Policy HC12.3 and as such the recording of no net loss of community facilities over the monitoring year is positive.

This indicator will help to demonstrate whether the policy is effective in protecting community facilities.

12.Site Allocations

The Local Plan includes a variety of site allocations for residential, mixed-use, employment and education development. In total, these allocations are expected to deliver 8,604 homes over the plan period and so represent a critical element of meeting the target for 13,328 over the plan period and 784 dwellings per annum. This section of the AMR monitors any progress made on each of these allocated sites.

Figure 10 replicated from Figure 13.1 of the Local Plan provides a map of all allocated sites in the Local Plan.

Figure 13.1: Allocated sites for delivery

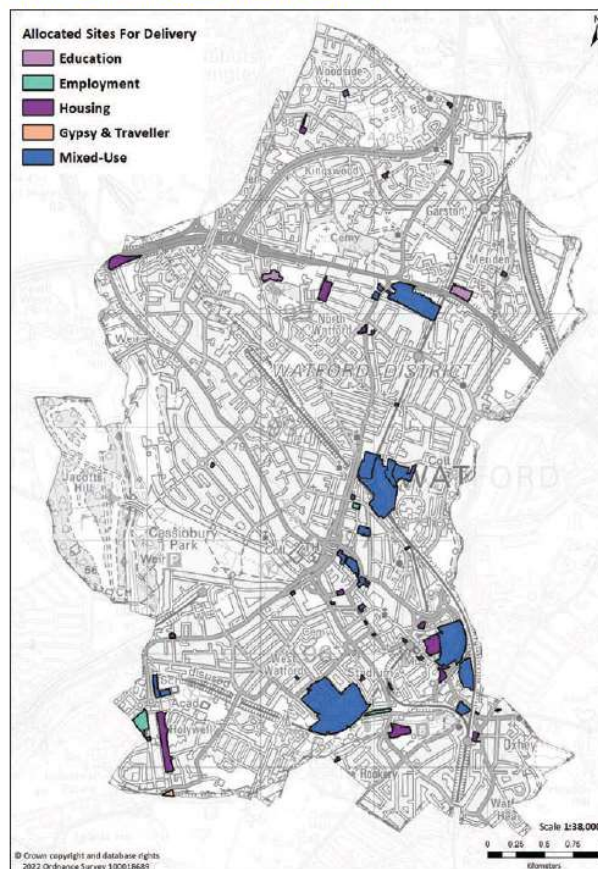


Figure 10 - Allocated sites in the Local Plan

Residential Site Allocations

There are a total of 32 purely residential site allocations in the Plan. Table 67 reports any planning or delivery updates that have been reported over the monitoring year. There have occasionally been major updates that occur between the end of the monitoring year and the time of writing, where this is the case, they have been reported in the table but acknowledged as being within the 24/25 monitoring period.

Table 67: Progress on residential site allocations over the monitoring year (MY)

Reference/Name	Yield	Progress/Updates over MY
HS01- Lych Gate	5	Development underway two 1-bed and two 2-bed flats (21/00304/FUL) (4 dwellings under construction)
HS02- 275 Shepcot Lane	21	No update
HS03- 1 Lavinia Avenue	5	No update
HS04- 5 Shepcot Drive	9	No update
HS05- Land at Badger PH	9	No update
HS06- Land at Russell Lane	93	Pending consideration (23/00949/FULM)
HS07- Former Mothercare site	98	145 dwellings completed over the monitoring year (20/00803/OPD and 21/00455/AAPA) 9 houses are currently under construction (22/00565/FUL)
HS08- Longspring Car Park	17	No update
HS09- Land and Buildings at 420-420a St Albans Road	9	No update
HS10- Land at Balmoral Road	5	Pending consideration (24/00795/FULM)
HS11- Land to the Rear of 53 Langley Way	7	No update
HS12- Land and Garages between 139-149 Queens Road	5	No update
HS13- Corner of Park Avenue and Rickmansworth Road	9	No update
HS14- Land at 14-20 Upton Road	48	No update
HS15- Land at 80 Cassio Road	17	No update
HS16- Land and Buildings at 176-186 Rickmansworth Road	12	No update
HS17- 120-122 Exchange Road	5	No update
HS18- Car Park at Vicarage Road/Exchange Road	5	No update
HS19- Crown Passage Car Park	18	No update
HS20- Land at Lower Derby Road	59	No update
HS21- Land at Waterfields Retail Park	414	No update
HS22- Land and Buildings at 252-272 Lower High Street	110	No update

HS23- Land and Buildings at 247 Lower High Street	31	No update
HS24- Land and Garages between 41 and 61 Brightwell Road	4	No update
HS25- Land and Garages to the rear of 15-17 Liverpool Road	11	No update
HS26- Land and Garages to the rear of Elfrida Road	8	No update
HS27- Land at Croxley View	240	Completed 2022 (21/00592/NONMAT), 5439sqm floorspace, 86 units
HS28- Wiggenhall Depot	330	No update
HS29- 41 Aldenham Road	5	Permission granted for 9 residential units (11 beds total) with a floorspace of 497sqm (24/00057/FUL)
HS30- Chalk Hill Car Park	9	No update
HS31- Land at Bushey Station	68	No update
HS32- Riverside Road and Garages	5	Completed 5 residential units (15 beds total) with a floorspace of 555sqm in September 2021 (20/00413/FUL)

What Happened?:

One allocated site for housing (HS07) reported net completions over this monitoring year. A further 9 dwellings on the HS07 site are currently under construction.

4 dwellings are under construction on the HS01 site and a further 9 dwellings have been granted permission on the HS29 site.

Comparisons:

As this is still early in the plan period it would be unlikely that a large number of site allocations are already delivering. However, there was an increase in applications granted this monitoring year compared to 0 reported last year.

It will be vital to assess how sites are progressing over the coming years to ensure that delivery remains aligned to the housing trajectory in Appendix B of the Local Plan.

Implications for the Local Plan:

The delivery of housing is crucial in maintaining a five-year housing supply, and in passing the Housing Delivery Test, and therefore ensuring that the policies in the Plan remain up to date and be given full weight by Planning Inspectors at appeals.

The delivery of residential site allocations remains an important part of ensuring that housing needs are met.

Mixed-Use Housing Allocations

Alongside the above residential allocations there are a variety of mixed-use allocations incorporating residential and employment or E class uses.

Table 68 provides any planning or delivery updates that have been reported over the monitoring year.

Table 68: Progress on mixed use site allocations over the monitoring year (MY)

Reference/Name	Yield	Progress/Updates over MY
MU01- Land at Woodside Community Centre	12	No update
MU02- Land at 501 St Albans Road	13	No update
MU03- Land at the Lemarie Centre	7	No update
MU04- 453 St Albans Road	18	No update
MU05- Land and Buildings at 94-98 St Albans Road	1214	<p>Development underway for 4604sqm non-residential floorspace (A1, B1, D1, sui generis) and 1214 residential units (19/00507/FULM)</p> <p>Subject to a Variation of condition (21/01575/VARM) on 703 of these units. This was approved and started over the last monitoring year, but completions have not yet been recorded.</p> <p>Subject to a Non-Material Amendment (21/00094/NONMAT) on 249 of these units. This application was reported as started over the monitoring year but no completions yet recorded.</p> <p>Application received to increase building height to provide 75 additional dwellings: pending consideration (23/01052/VARM).</p> <p>Total for MY is 952 under construction.</p>
MU06- Land at Watford Junction	1232	No update
MU07- Land and Buildings at Astral House	131	No update
MU08- 22-28 Station Road	21	No update
MU09- Land at Watford Police Station	120	Pending consideration 24/00615/FULM
MU10- Land at the Rear of 125-127 The Parade	90	No update
MU11- 23-37 The Parade	72	Pending consideration at the time of writing 23/00391/FULM
MU12- 19-21 Clarendon Road	14	Permission granted (21/01811/FULM) for 65 dwellings over the previous monitoring year.

MU13- Land at Sainsbury's Town Centre	220	No update
MU14- Land at the Car Park, Wellstones	40	Application for 89 dwellings refused during the monitoring year and is pending an appeal decision during the monitoring year (22/01226/FULM)
MU15- 18 Watford Field Road	19	No update
MU16- Land at Tesco, Lower High Street	1338	No update
MU17- Land at Colne Valley Retail Park	466	No update
MU18- Land to the West of and Parallel to Ascot Road	43	No update
MU19- Land East of Ascot Road	27	No update
MU20- Land at Riverwell	1383	142 dwellings completed this monitoring year. 8021sqm non-residential C2 floorspace completed this MY (19/01342/VARM).
MU21- Land at Colne Bridge Retail Park	141	No update
MU22- Land at Asda, Dome Roundabout	422	No update
MU23- Land at Colonial Way/Clive Way	8,215sqm of industrial floorspace	Development underway for 1556sqm E(g)(i) and 6,225sqm industrial floorspace (21/00971/FULM)

What Happened?:

Several mixed-use sites currently have granted permissions or are pending consideration. There was a total of 142 completed dwellings and 8,021sqm of C2 floorspace reported across these site allocations over the monitoring year; all recorded as part of the Riverwell Development.

Several other planning updates are reported in the table, including 952 dwellings under construction at MU05 (Land and Buildings at 94-98 St Albans Road) and the pending appeal decision at MU14 (Land at Wellstones Car Park).

Comparisons:

It is positive to see progress on some of these allocations and the delivery at Riverwell. It will be vital to assess how sites are progressing over the coming years to ensure that delivery remains aligned with the housing trajectory in Appendix B of the Local Plan.

Implications for the Local Plan:

The delivery of housing is crucial in maintaining a five-year housing supply, and in passing the Housing Delivery Test, and therefore ensuring that the policies in the Plan remain up to date and given full weight by Planning Inspectors at appeals.

The delivery of mixed-use site allocations remains an important part of ensuring that housing needs are met.

Employment Site Allocations

Table 13.3 of the Local Plan allocates several sites for employment uses.

Delivery of these sites will be crucial to ensuring that the needs for both office and industrial floorspace will be met. The below table will report any updates over the monitoring year.

Table 69: Progress on employment allocations over the monitoring year (MY)

Reference/Name	Uses	Progress/Updates over MY
EM01- Cassiobury House, 11-19 Station Road	Office	Development underway for 248sqm office floorspace (22/01106/FUL)
EM02- South of Wiggenshall Industrial Estate	Industrial	Permission granted for 1623sqm of B8 floorspace (23/00626/FULM)
EM03- Gateway Zone	Industrial	Completed in current monitoring year (21/01605/VARM)
EM04- Land between 14-18 Greenhill Crescent	Industrial	No update

What Happened?:

Over this monitoring year, there was 6719sqm of employment floorspace completed at EM03 (The Gateway), 1623sqm of B8 floorspace permitted and 248sqm of office floorspace is under construction.

Comparisons:

It is positive to see there are site allocations already delivering or under construction this early in the plan period.

Implications for the Local Plan:

This indicator will assess the delivery of employment floorspace in the Borough which will allow the Council to see how these key employment sites are coming forward and whether they are able to provide job opportunities for local people.

The strong delivery and progress recorded on employment allocations this year reflects the strong local economic market in Watford and the viability of the area for employment development of different types.

Education Site Allocations

The delivery of sufficient education facilities to support the level of new development expected in the area is crucial to achieving sustainable development and providing essential infrastructure to meet needs. Table 13.4 of the Local Plan, therefore, allocates two sites as being suitable for a new education facility.

Table 70 below will report any updates and progress on these two sites over the plan period.

Table 70: Progress on education allocations over the monitoring year (MY)

Reference/Name	Uses	Progress/Updates over MY
ED01- Former Meriden School Site	Education	No update
ED02- Former Bill Everett Centre	Education	No update

What Happened?:

There was no delivery or permissions granted on education allocations over the monitoring year.

Comparisons:

There has been no delivery in either of the first two years of the plan period.

Implications for the Local Plan:

It is important that education facilities are delivered alongside housing growth in the Borough to ensure that there are sufficient school places to cater for an increased population. The delivery of these two sites is therefore critical to achieving sustainable development over the plan period.

It is still early in the plan period and so it is not surprising to see limited progress on these sites. This indicator will report progress on the development of these allocations going forward.