

CHAPTER 2: VISION, PRINCIPLES and AIMS

A Vision for Watford

- 2.1 The Council wants to see Watford as a town where people thrive because:
- There is a wealth of opportunity for employment, leisure and cultural opportunities and an attractive residential environment.
 - Streets and public places are smart, clean and safe.
 - It is a sustainable, healthy and environmentally friendly community.
 - High quality, value for money public services are delivered in a fair and equal way to all sections of the community.
 - There is a strong sense of community spirit and civic pride, based on valuing the contribution of all individuals and communities.
 - Citizens are able to express their views and influence decisions about the future of the town.
- 2.2 It is a vision that will take many years to achieve and one which requires the support of local residents, businesses, community groups and the dedication of the Council and other public bodies and partners to carry it through. This Plan has been written within the context of the Council's framework for action and will make a significant contribution towards achieving the Council's vision and meeting the aspirations of the residents and the wider community.
- 2.3 The Plan sets out the Council's planning policies which together seek to promote and steer development in Watford in a way which will achieve the vision and balance the needs of the town, its residents and the wider community that it serves. The Plan will act as a catalyst for change, a guide to developers and a means by which to control inappropriate development.
- 2.4 The Plan will be based upon the following vision, where
- the town's greatest resource, its people and their needs are put first
 - the most important issue we face is to achieve a balance between social, economic and environmental issues
 - everyone lives in a safe, healthy and pleasing environment
 - everyone has the choice and opportunity to develop skills, find suitable employment and contribute to the Watford economy
 - the use of the car is not a necessity, but people can choose to walk, cycle or take passenger transport to work, to school and to get daily shopping and other essential services
 - access to the town centre, leisure facilities within the town and open areas surrounding it is made an easy and preferred choice by passenger transport or by walking or cycling
 - the town's open spaces are protected and their ability to support and protect wildlife, provide essential amenity areas and recreation is enhanced, and open spaces are linked by landscaped corridors, free from cars
 - people with disabilities can participate fully in community life and experience to their full potential the benefits of living and working in or visiting Watford
 - people can move freely through the town centre to browse, shop, eat out, meet friends, feel secure and relaxed, enjoy the townscape, discuss public street-art and experience enjoyable leisure times
 - enhanced, protected and well-designed urban spaces within the town which are humanised by landscaping become public spaces that are well used and valued by people
 - good design is seen as the key to a successful and pleasing environment for Watford.
 - the people of Watford find it easier to take pride in their town and be proud of their contribution towards protecting and enhancing their environment for themselves and future generations and so enjoy a high quality of life

- people feel safe.

Achieving the Vision

2.5 The Plan has a network of aims, objectives and policies:

Aims set out in general terms what the Plan is seeking to achieve. They are often on-going or achieved progressively over long periods and are, therefore, likely to be carried forward into subsequent plans.

Objectives translate aims into specific topics (such as for housing or shopping), provide clearer goals for this plan period and form the structure from which detailed policies emerge. Objectives both within and across topic areas are often inter-related.

Policies provide detailed criteria against which development proposals are to be determined. Proposals will usually be judged against more than one policy. Successive planning decisions in accordance with relevant policies combine to realise objectives and so contribute towards meeting the Plan's aims.

Monitoring Objectives and policies will be monitored throughout the plan period. It is essential that they:

- remain responsive to local circumstances;
- are reflective of the planning wishes of local people and businesses;
- encompass relevant and current Government planning advice;
- are robust against challenge;
- and can best achieve the Plan's aims and vision.

Sustainability Principles

2.6 This vision is based on the principle of Sustainable Development defined as “development which meets present needs without compromising the ability of future generations to achieve their needs and aspirations” (the Brundtland definition).

2.7 The understanding of sustainability has been expanded into the broad “UK Indicators of Sustainable Development”. The DETR summarises these into the following key points:

- A healthy economy should be maintained to promote quality of life while at the same time protecting human health and the environment, in the UK and overseas, with all participants in all sectors paying the full social and environmental costs of their decisions;
- Non-renewable resources should be used optimally;
- Renewable resources should be used sustainably;
- Damage to the carrying capacity of the environment and the risk to human health and biodiversity from the effects of economic activity should be minimised.

2.8 To realise this vision, sustainable development, based on this definition, must underpin the whole plan. All policies, implementation and review are considered within the framework of sustainable development. Working with other agencies the Council will seek to encourage a more sustainable pattern of development.

2.9 Within this framework the Council outlines the following priorities-

Table 1: Our Commitment to Achieving More Sustainable Development

The Council will ensure that all new developments regardless of size should play their part in
--

seeking

- ❑ to use land efficiently
- ❑ to minimise energy demands
- ❑ to reduce the need for transport movements and, where possible, incorporate technologies to limit the direct or indirect causes of greenhouse gas emissions
- ❑ to reduce the overall need for private commuter car journeys by making full use of locations which encourage walking or cycling and the use of passenger transport
- ❑ to locate in areas where single journeys can serve several functions or through appropriate mixed land use development schemes
- ❑ to encourage in principle development schemes which seek to incorporate renewable energy generating technologies (e.g. utilising solar energy) and efficient building design /orientation
- ❑ wherever possible to use renewable resources and recycled materials in construction
- ❑ to ensure that uses which are likely to cause pollution directly or indirectly are carefully considered in the development control process
- ❑ to protect existing open areas, enhance their use, provide a benefit to wildlife and appearance and, wherever possible, to provide additional spaces, particularly in association with developments that may increase recreational and open space demands
- ❑ ensure that open spaces are easily accessible by all people and are safe environments for play and recreation

Plan Aims

2.10 The Plan's aims are:

Sustainability

All development must be carried out in line with the sustainability aims set out in Policy 1 of the Hertfordshire Structure Plan Review 1991-2011. The following encapsulate those aims:

- To promote regeneration, social inclusion and sustainable patterns of development by ensuring that all development is carried out in ways which minimise any adverse impact on the environment and local community.
- To enable people to live life to the full without placing unnecessary demands on the environment or on energy resources, by seeking a gradual change in land use patterns and in behaviour.

Natural Environment

- To encourage a high quality environment, to protect and enhance the natural environment, wildlife and vegetation and their contribution to visual and wider environmental amenity and preserve the Green Belt and areas of open space.

Built Environment

- To enhance the Built Environment through careful control of development, improvements to townscape and landscape, protection of historic buildings and areas and the encouragement of development that delivers sustainable objectives

Integrated Transport

- To develop and implement a transportation strategy with the County Council to meet the transport needs of the town, its residents and the wider community that it serves in a sustainable manner which reduces the need to travel and encourages travel by means other than the private car.

Housing

- To adequately meet local housing needs including the need for affordable and lifetime housing whilst ensuring that there is not an overall over-supply of housing.

Local Economy

- To create the right conditions in which business can thrive and prosper by revitalising and broadening the local economy,

Shopping

- To ensure the continued viability and vitality of established shopping centres and the multi-functional role of Watford Town Centre based around shopping.

Crime Prevention

- To promote land use and urban design measures to enhance security, make crime more difficult to commit and to increase the detection of potential offenders.

Community Need, Social Equity and Participation

- To make adequate appropriate provision for development to meet local community needs and to enhance quality of life.

Design Principles

- To ensure the quality and longevity of development by supporting and encouraging the principles of good sustainable design.