



**WATFORD
BOROUGH
COUNCIL**

Equality Impact Analysis

Title of policy, function or service	Watford High Street Design Proposals
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Person completing the EIA	Brian Scott
Type of policy, function or service:	Existing (reviewed) <input type="checkbox"/> New/Proposed <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Version & Date	Version 1 - 07/11/2017 DRAFT Version 2 – 08/11/2017 DRAFT Version 3 – 24/11/2017 (amend to logo)

1. Background

Watford High Street is a busy high street with a variety of attractions including shops, restaurants, markets and a church which draw in number of different users resulting in high footfall. The existing intu shopping centre is also undergoing significant regeneration and investment, which is likely to increase the footfall in the area both during the day and into the evening.

The council is proposing to build on this private sector investment and revitalise the High Street so that the whole of the town centre benefits from the development currently underway. The public realm enhancements which are being proposed will improve the high street by giving a perception of space through widening footways, and using similar materials to those already in situ in other areas of the town centre. Improvements to lighting and CCTV provision will also provide a safer environment. To facilitate these enhancements changes to some bus routes, bus stops and location of blue badge and taxi bays are proposed.

2. Focus of the Equality Impact Analysis

This EIA, therefore, considers the potential equality related impacts, both positive and negative of these improvements to Watford High Street including road layout and relocation of taxi ranks, blue badge parking and bus stops on the people in the groups or with the characteristics protected by the Equalities Act 2010.

The characteristics to consider within this EIA are:

1. Age
2. Disability
3. Gender Reassignment
4. Pregnancy and maternity
5. Race
6. Religion or belief
7. Sex (gender)
8. Sexual Orientation
9. Marriage and Civil Partnership.

3. Engagement and consultation

Key stakeholders were contacted in July and August 2017. These stakeholders included: bus operators, taxi drivers, councillors, Hertfordshire County Council, Police, Fire Brigade, cycling groups, disability groups and local businesses.

The stakeholders were invited to view the proposed design concepts for the High Street on the Watford Borough Council website and to comment on these proposals. This engagement aimed to inform these stakeholders of the proposals and to use comments received to inform the final proposed layout to ensure the design would meet their needs.

As part of the engagement, representatives from Project Centre presented the proposed concept for the High Street at a workshop with bus operators in July 2017, Watford BID undertook engagement with their members, the plans were on the Watford Borough Council website and key stakeholders were directed to the website to make their comments. Disability Watford and Shop Mobility Watford were contacted directly with the proposals. Targeted information sharing with taxis drivers took place via text message, this directed them to the website detailing the proposals. A poster was

Comment [LS1]: Were Age concern contacted? Were BME in Watford organisations contacted, eg, Watford African Caribbean Association? Watford Women's Centre? **Do we have a list of voluntary sector groups with protected characteristics?**

sent to each of the bus operators to put in their buses and at bus shelters to inform their customers of the proposals.

Can we say what level of feedback was received e.g. from the taxi drivers

4. What we know about the Watford population

It is anticipated that the majority of those accessing the High Street on a regular basis are likely to be residents of Watford. These users will have used one of the many transport links to the town centre. A profile of the population of the town is outlined below.

Population

The current population of Watford is 96,800 (mid 2017 estimate) and is estimated to grow by 16% by 2026.

Ethnicity

Watford has a very diverse population more so than the rest of Hertfordshire.

For Watford, overall the Census 2011 shows the following breakdown in terms of ethnicity: White British (61.9%), White other (7.7%), Pakistani (6.7%), British Indian (5.5%) and British other Asian (4.4%).

It has been observed anecdotally that the majority of taxis drivers' ethnicity is Indian or Pakistani.

Age

The largest populations by age band in Watford are:

- 25-44 (31,700)
- 45-59 (18,100)

The numbers in each successive age-band fall progressively until there are estimated to be 6,000 who are 75+.

Health

Around 85% of the population of Watford state that they have 'good health' and just under 14% recording a disability.

5. How will the council ensure equality is promoted through improvements to Watford High Street

Under the Equality Act 2010, three areas need to be considered when analysing the equality impact of the proposals:

1. **eliminate** discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under the Act
2. **advance** equality of opportunity between people who share a relevant protected characteristic and people who do not share it
3. **foster** good relations between people who share a relevant protected characteristic and people who do not

Comment [LS2]: This accounts for 86% of the population: are these the top five? If so, can this be said otherwise the selection of ethnic groups looks arbitrary? Faith groups?

A. Positive impacts

Those visiting the High Street will have a better high street experience.

There will be an enhanced feeling of space and ease of movement throughout the area, there will be improved lighting during the evenings and CCTV to increase the feeling of safety, a more attractive environment (coupled with the increased evening economy) will increase natural surveillance, reduction in traffic flows and speeds through the space will reduce risk of accidents and improve air quality.

Overall, residents and visitors to the High Street should benefit from the improvements but there are particularly positive impacts for equality groups including:

- those with disabilities relating to mobility, age-related mobility issues, those with caring responsibilities or those who are pregnant or have children in pushchairs as they will see:
 - Wider footways, thereby improving ease of movement
 - Reduced number of vehicle types causing congestion in the High Street and the positive air quality impacts this will bring
 - Net increase of blue badge bays in the High Street overall
 - Improved facilities for cyclists with an advisory contra-flow cycle lane.
 - Dedicated taxi area with wayfinding with net increase in full time bays and longer operating hours of these bays
 - Narrowing of carriageway resulting in lower traffic speeds
 - Vehicles travelling through this section of the High Street will have to travel at a slower speed making the area safer. e reduction in parking means sight lines are improved and vehicles should not block crossing points which can affect users with wheelchairs, prams or a mobility disability.
- Those who are often more likely to be victims of hate crimes, such as certain ethnic groups, those with gender reassignment, hate crimes associated with sexual orientation or gender and gang crime as they will see:
 - Improved lighting and CCTV thereby increasing safety
 - Greater movement of people in the area, including in the evening thereby natural surveillance

Comment [LS3]: "The"?

In addition, a better laid out, inviting High Street with more shared space should enhance the role the town centre plays in Watford as a focus for the town's communities and where people who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not can meet, mingle and enjoy a communal experience and a sense of community spirit. The improvements will, therefore, foster good relations and build on Watford's strong sense of community and local pride.

B. Negative impacts

The proposed changes are likely to have the following negative impacts:

- **Disruption during the works**

This may result in the High Street temporarily feeling more congested and harder to navigate and, in particular, users with mobility or sight issues (which might be age-related), those with prams, or wheelchair users may have difficulty getting round within the more limited space. Additional noise can impact those with certain disabilities as can dust and debris generated through building works. Those with issues such as dementia may also experience negative impacts as the disruption could be disorientating and impact familiar landmarks and services

Comment [LS4]: Add "impaired"

- **Permanent changes to the High Street layout**

The alterations to the layout of the High Street may have negative impacts for the following reasons:

- **Relocation of bus stops.** The scheme recommends a consolidation of bus stops into a central location, which means that there will be changes for some bus users in terms of the distance walked to waiting points. Again, the negative impact would be on those with mobility issues, those with prams, or wheelchair users.

However, no routes are being removed from the High Street and the centralisation might have positive impacts for some bus users

This change will require additional wayfinding to ensure users can find these services.

- **Blue badge bays.** There is a potential negative impact through the removal of blue badge bays from their current location in the town centre. There is, however, a net gain of five blue badge parking bays overall, although these bays are further from this area of the High Street. It should also be noted that the new blue badge bays will operate for a longer period than the current ones, which are not available until after 11am to allow for loading vehicles to use this space to service shops, restaurants etc.

In addition Intu are looking at increasing the number of blue badge parking bays available in their car park which will provide an accessible location to many of the shops

This change will require additional wayfinding to ensure users can find these services.

- **Taxi bays.** There is a net gain of one taxi bay during the day and six bays at night proposed as part of this project (to be located at Wellstones). However, these bays are not directly on the High Street. There could be a negative impact for people looking to access taxis if they have mobility issues or if they have a pushchair / pram or care responsibilities related to young children or older people.

There are a number of actions proposed to mitigate this negative impact:

- A digital sign will be erected and will identify when a taxi is waiting in Wellstones to assist those wanting to get a taxi from this location, especially

during the evening, although this might not be easy to access for those with visual impairments

- The new taxi bays will be 24 hour – not restricted in time as the current ones are (taxis can only use them between 2pm and 5am). Those in Church Street are also being made full time
- Whilst the High Street is not open to all vehicles the rising bollard system will allow people to be picked up if they call for a taxi and so this will reduce the negative impact on those with mobility issues, in wheelchairs or with caring responsibilities. There are additional taxi bays within the town centre and, associated with improvement work
- There is no data on the protected characteristics of the taxi drivers impacted by the change in location of the taxi bays and so no definitive conclusion can be reached on the equality impact on this stakeholder group. However, mitigation has been proposed to reduce the impact of the loss of ranks on the High Street, which includes additional space (one in the day and six at night) at a location just behind the High Street, improved access to this area and the ability to pick up users by the lowering of the bollards if necessary. The hours that taxi bays are available has also been extended. The council continues to engage with the taxi community.

This change will require additional wayfinding to ensure users can find these services.

Where appropriate, a translation service is available to assist those where English is not their first language to ensure all users are aware of the proposals and so are not detrimentally impacted through lack of information.

Overall conclusion

Meeting the Public Sector Equality Duty

This EIA has taken into account the council's public sector equality duty under s149 of the Equality Act 2010 and is intended to assist the council in meeting its duty. The council is required to have due regard to the need to:

- **eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct prohibited by the Act**
The greater pedestrianisation of the High Street, improved lighting and CCTV and the overall increase in movement of people within and through the evening is deemed to be a deterrent to acts of discrimination, harassment and victimisation and potential hate crimes. This is especially important to those who are more likely to be victims of hate crimes.
- **advance equality of opportunity between persons who share relevant protected characteristics and persons who do not share it**
There are a number of positive impacts identified that advance equality of opportunity. The design proposals should improve people's access to the High Street and the ease with which they are able to circulate without encountering obstacles or feeling at threat from a significant number of vehicles. This is particularly beneficial for people with protected

characteristics that can affect mobility, how easily they can navigate through a busy town centre and generally make full use of public realm. Protected characteristics include age (older people, people with young families) and disability.

It is recognised that in the short-term the work to deliver the proposals will have negative impacts on people with specific protected characteristics. Those identified include older people, those with disabilities and those with caring responsibilities who may need to use prams / pushchairs or have caring responsibilities for young children, people with disabilities or the elderly. The majority of these negative impacts will only be in place whilst the works are being done but there are potential permanent negative impacts.

The loss of the current blue badge bays on the High Street is identified as a negative impact. Mitigation is in place to address this impact through the creation of new bays, including the addition of five more than are currently available. However, it is acknowledged these are not in the same location as the bays that are being removed i.e. on the High Street. The intu centre is reviewing blue badge provision within its car parks and any additional spaces would provide further mitigation. These provide an alternative to parking on the street and gives ready access to the shops and other facilities and services within the intu centre.

There is a potential negative impact for some protected characteristics on the relocation of the taxi bays as for those with mobility issues, visual impairment and caring responsibilities there might be greater difficulty in getting to the relocated rank.

However, the provision within the proposals to allow people to be picked up (with the lowering of the bollards that will prevent vehicular access) will provide mitigation to this negative impact. There are further taxi bays within the town centre that maintain provision for potential taxi users. These are operating for longer and so will provide better service availability for users.

Designated taxi areas will ensure customers can easily find and navigate to the town centre taxi ranks.

- **foster good relations between persons who share relevant protected characteristics and persons who do not share it**

The town centre welcomes thousands of visitors every day and, is, therefore, a vital part of the town's civic life where people meet, mix and intermingle. Improving access and opening up shared space supports the fostering of good relations, including those between people who share relevant protected characteristics and persons who do not.

7. Recommendations

- Ensure communication on the proposals is well planned and managed
- Ensure that there is appropriate levels of signage during the works and that all attempts are made to minimise disruption to users of the High Street during the works
- Engagement with key stakeholders is on-going through design and build
- Ensure that the relocated blue badge bays and taxi rank are well signed and promoted

8. Overview of EIA findings

The overall conclusion of the EIA is that the positive impacts of the proposals outweigh the negative impacts, given the aim to improve the town centre to enhance the experience for residents and visitors, but there are recommendations to mitigate the negative impacts where possible. The council will seek to ensure the needs of people with disabilities, older people and those with caring responsibilities are taken into account. In particular, the EIA recommends that parking for blue badge holders within the town centre (including car parks) is promoted.

Summary of potential positive and negative impacts on protected characteristics

Protected Characteristic	Positive	Negative	None	Reasons for decision
Age	Positive	Negative		<p>Positive</p> <p>Improvements to overall layout of the High Street, including better wayfinding, net increase in blue badge bays and dedicated full-time taxi bays.</p> <p>Wider footways enable greater ease of movement, multiple seating areas provide resting points and reduction of street clutter removed potential trip hazards</p> <p>The new layout is anticipated to improve issues related to community safety and the potential of hate crime.</p> <p>The improved public realm will enhance this area as a place where people meet and mingle, thus providing an opportunity for fostering good community relations.</p> <p>Negative</p> <p>The removal of current blue badge bays from the High Street.</p> <p>The moving of the taxi ranks.</p>
Disability	Positive	Negative		<p>Positive</p> <p>Improvements to overall layout of the High Street, including better wayfinding, net increase in blue badge bays and dedicated full time taxi rank.</p> <p>Wider footways enable greater ease of movement, multiple seating areas provide resting points and reduction of street clutter removed potential trip hazards</p> <p>The current bays on the High Street are abused by those “popping” into a shop, the relocation will hopefully stop this practice.</p>

Protected Characteristic	Positive	Negative	None	Reasons for decision
				<p>The new layout is anticipated to improve issues related to community safety and the potential of hate crime.</p> <p>The improved public realm will enhance this area as a place where people meet and mingle, thus providing an opportunity for fostering good community relations.</p> <p>Intu is considering increasing the number of blue badge bays they provide in their parking thereby addressing the concern that the bays are further from the shopping area. Vehicles which currently park over pedestrian crossings cause a nuisance and reduce safety of the area, these vehicles will be prohibited from the High Street thereby removing this risk.</p> <p>Negative The removal of current blue badge bay from the High Street.</p> <p>The moving of the taxi ranks.</p>
Ethnicity	Positive		None	<p>Changes to the High Street follow an approach to create a better high street for all, changes have been proposed for a number of services: buses, taxis, blue badges, cyclists and car users. The improved public realm will enhance this area as a place where people meet and mingle, thus providing an opportunity for fostering good community relations.</p> <p>The new layout is anticipated to improve issues related to community safety and the potential of hate crime.</p>

Protected Characteristic	Positive	Negative	None	Reasons for decision
Sex	Positive		None	<p>Changes to the high street follow an approach to create a better high street for all, changes have been proposed for a number of services: buses, taxis, blue badges, cyclists and car users. The improved public realm will enhance this area as a place where people meet and mingle, thus providing an opportunity for fostering good community relations.</p> <p>Improvements to lighting and CCTV would improve safety and security for vulnerable users of the High Street, especially in the evening, which could include women.</p>
Sexual orientation	Positive			<p>Changes to the high street follow an approach to create a better high street for all,</p> <p>Improvements to lighting and CCTV will reduce the risk of hate crimes and thereby positively impact on this group.</p> <p>The improved public realm will enhance this area as a place where people meet and mingle, thus providing an opportunity for fostering good community relations.</p>
Religion			None	<p>Changes to the high street follow an approach to create a better high street for all, changes have been proposed for a number of services: buses, taxis, blue badges, cyclists and car users.</p> <p>The improved public realm will enhance this area as a place where people meet and mingle, thus providing an opportunity for fostering good community relations.</p>

Protected Characteristic	Positive	Negative	None	Reasons for decision
Pregnancy/maternity	Positive			<p>Changes to the high street follow an approach to create a better high street for all,</p> <p>Widening of footways and reduction in street furniture clutter will support this group as they navigate the street with pushchairs and young children</p> <p>Vehicles which currently park over pedestrian crossings cause a nuisance and reduce safety of the area, these vehicles will be prohibited from entering the High Street thereby removing this risk.</p> <p>The new layout is anticipated to improve issues related to community safety and the potential of hate crime. The improved public realm will enhance this area as a place where people meet and mingle, thus providing an opportunity for fostering good community relations.</p>
Gender orientation	Positive			<p>Changes to the high street follow an approach to create a better high street for all,</p> <p>Improvements to lighting and CCTV will reduce the risk of hate crimes and thereby positively impact on this group.</p> <p>The improved public realm will enhance this area as a place where people meet and mingle, thus providing an opportunity for fostering good community relations.</p>

Summary of potential positive impacts and ways in which they can be ensured

Positive Impact	Protected characteristics	Ways to ensure the positive impact
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Improved facilities for cyclists with an advisory contra-flow cycle lane. - Net increase in number of blue badge bays - Dedicated taxi area with wayfinding with net increase in number of full time bays - Narrowing of carriageway resulting in lower traffic speeds - Wider footways 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Age (age related mobility issues, Parents and Carers with young children) • Disability (mobility related issues and visual impairment) • Sexual orientation, Gender Reassignment, race, religion or belief, sex (those who are more at risk of certain type of crimes, such as hate crimes and abuse). 	<p>Ensure the net increase in blue badge bays on the highway and bays included within the Intu development are installed.</p> <p>Provide correspondence with information/maps showing the new locations of parking, buses and taxis when installed.</p> <p>Good communication and PR will be needed to advise people of the new locations of parking, buses and bays and this should be clearly signposted throughout the town centre.</p> <p>Ensure communications are available in a number of languages for trades and users.</p>

Positive Impact	Protected characteristics	Ways to ensure the positive impact
- Reduced number of vehicle types causing congestion in the High Street	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maternity (Mobility) 	Ensure monitoring and maintenance of lighting and CCTV to ensure safety

Summary of potential negative impacts and ways in which they can be removed or mitigated

Negative Impact	Protected characteristics	Ways to mitigate the negative impact
<p>Changes to the location/layout of:</p> <p>Blue badge parking</p> <p>Taxi bays</p> <p>Bus stops</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Age (age related mobility issues) • Disability (mobility related issues and visual impairments) 	<p>In terms of mitigation, continued engagement with the groups affected such as blue badge users, taxi drivers and bus operators should be a priority to ensure that where possible negative impacts are mitigated.</p> <p>Ensure correspondence is available in a number of languages, so all users are aware of the changes.</p> <p>Provide wayfinding/signposting throughout the high street, to ensure trade for taxis is not impacted, blue badge users are aware of the applicable bays and bus users can easily understand which bus stop to use for their service.</p> <p>Ensure appropriate lighting and CCTV coverage of Wellstones to ensure users feel safe using the space, especially in the evenings</p> <p>digital signage on the High Street to show when a taxi is waiting in Wellstones to enhance usage of the facility</p>

This EIA has been approved by:

..... **Date**

