

URBAN DESIGN & CONSERVATION STRATEGY



Adopted - 2014



Planning for a Better Watford



1.0 Introduction

1.1 The last District Plan to be adopted in Watford (2003) included a brief summary of existing documentation relating to urban conservation. The existing resources at that time were seen as a starting point for more detailed work, which has since been progressed under the more ambitious framework of this *Urban Design & Conservation Strategy*.

1.2 The Urban Design & Conservation Strategy overarches a suite of interrelated documents. The various documents are set out in Section 5, with detail on the timetable for potential future revisions.

1.3 Two key considerations in the ongoing development of the suite of documents have been the need to keep output simple and compact. The Urban Design & Conservation Strategy document itself has been written with this in mind and is therefore a fairly brief document.

2.0 The need for a strategy

2.1 Raising design quality and maximising the conservation of existing heritage assets is a fundamental aspect of spatial planning. This form of market intervention helps to ensure that existing resources are used efficiently and the built environment provides for the needs of current and future generations. In short, urban design and conservation help to enhance the shared experience of urban life through the tripartite outlook of economic, environmental and social considerations.

2.2 The benefits of embodying an appreciation of urban design and conservation in the wider processes of spatial planning and cultural development have been researched extensively elsewhere. Research by bodies such as the Heritage Lottery Fund, English Heritage, Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment and the Design Council has shown that there are significant economic benefits from effective heritage management and high quality design.

2.3 Environmental benefits can be observed in relation to the embodied energy contained in existing buildings and the potential of good urban design to facilitate more ecologically benign lifestyle choices. Social benefits can include the boosting of local civic identity, social capital and providing the resources that can lead to the development of a more pronounced 'sense of place' in urban environments.

2.4 The aims of the *Urban Design & Conservation Strategy* are in line with Watford Borough Council's higher level corporate objectives, as set out in the: 'Watford Corporate Plan: 2011-2015'¹ and 'Watford's Community Plan: 2006-2026'².

¹ <http://watford.moderngov.co.uk/documents/s741/>

² <http://www.watford.gov.uk/ccm/content/strategic-services/community-plan-folder/watfords-community-plan-2006---2026.en>

3.0 Aims of the strategy

3.1 The *Urban Design & Conservation Strategy* aims to develop a more proactive approach towards raising design quality and enhancing the urban environment. The key points are:

- to provide detailed evidence on the historical, architectural and archaeological assets of the town;
- to give greater protection to these assets through the use of statutory and non-statutory designations;
- to use development control and enforcement powers to regulate development which affects the assets;
- to undertake direct action where funds permit to protect and enhance the character of the assets;
- to seek additional external funding where possible, such as the Heritage Lottery Fund;
- to develop a range of design guides for the key types of development that take place in the Borough;
- to promote the importance of high quality urban design with key stakeholders, politicians and the wider community;
- to monitor design quality through the development process and ensure learning points are shared with those involved;
- to support higher level projects on spatial planning and regeneration in the Borough by embedding the importance of the urban design and conservation agenda;
- to improve the accessibility of information available on urban design and conservation.

4.0 The Local Plan

4.1 Higher level policy on design and conservation will be included in the key policy documents that make up the Local Plan. This includes the Local Plan Core Strategy (2013)³ and forthcoming Local Plan Part 2, which includes a document on Development Management Policies.

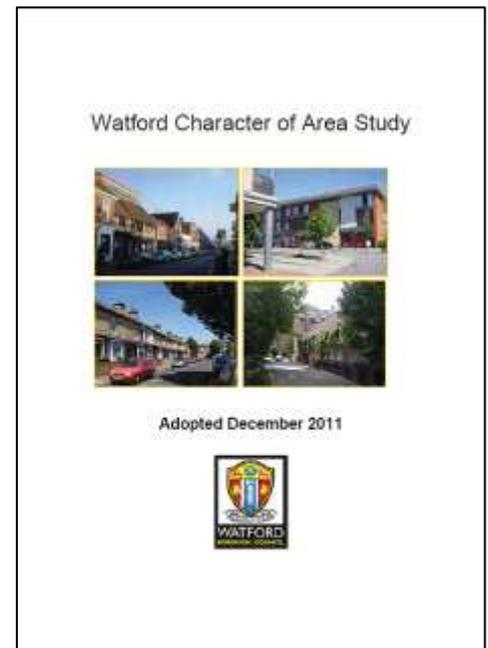
4.2 Any future Planning Briefs for identified development opportunity areas will need to consider urban design and conservation issues. Documents must refer to existing resources on these topics (e.g. Watford Character of Area Study) and build on the detail contained within them.

³ <http://www.watford.gov.uk/ccm/content/planning-and-development/core-strategy/adopted-local-plan-core-strategy.en>

5.0 The components of the wider strategy

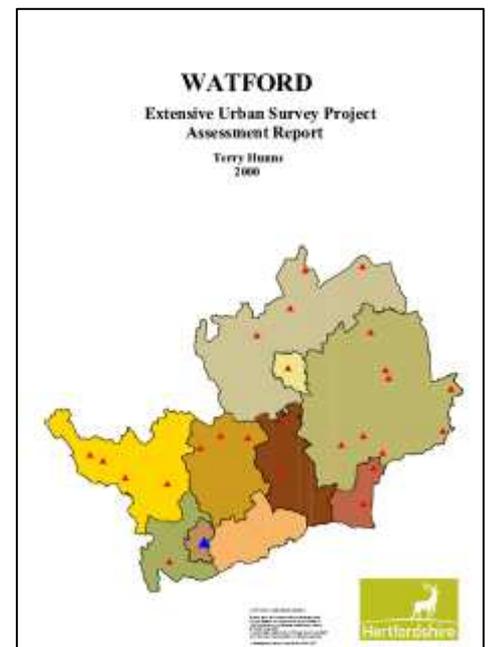
1. Watford Character of Area Study⁴

- > Document provides detailed information on the urban character of the Borough. This includes: text on historical development, a table listing key features, mapping and example images.
- > Adopted in 2011.
- > Next due for review in 2019.



2. Watford Extensive Urban Survey⁵

- > Document provides information on areas of archaeological interest within the Borough.
- > Adopted in 2000.
- > Not due to be reviewed, but additional detail will be provided in forthcoming Development Management Policies (part of Local Plan Part 2).

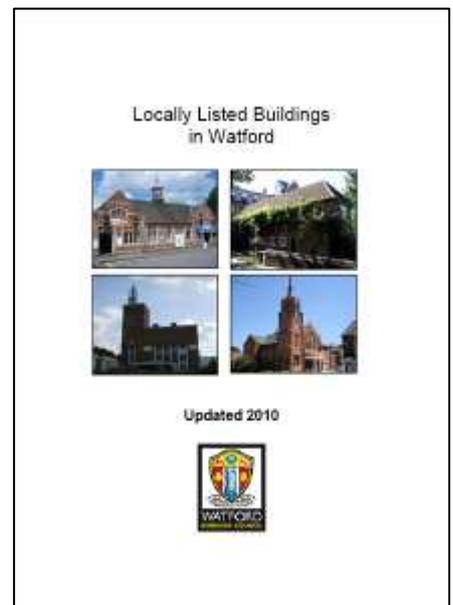


⁴ <http://www.watford.gov.uk/coas>

⁵ <http://www.watford.gov.uk/archaeology>

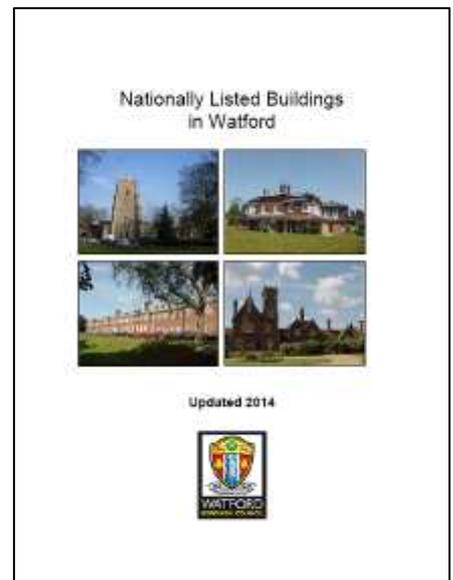
3. Locally Listed Buildings in Watford⁶

- > Document provides information on all Locally Listed Buildings within the Borough. This includes: building descriptions, pictures and detail on the reason for listing.
- > Adopted in 2010.
- > Next due for review in 2018.



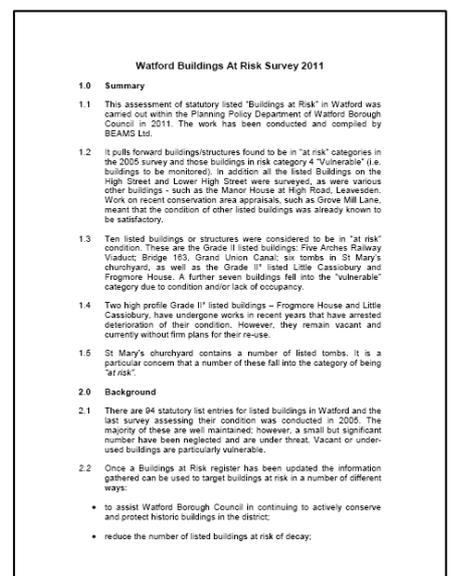
4. Nationally Listed Buildings in Watford⁷

- > Document provides information on all Nationally Listed Buildings within the Borough. This includes listing descriptions, pictures and additional information.
- > Adopted in 2014.
- > Next due for review in 2022.



5. Watford Buildings at Risk Survey⁸

- > Document provides information on Nationally Listed Buildings that are 'at risk' (including Grade II listings).
- > Adopted in 2011.
- > Next due for review in 2017.



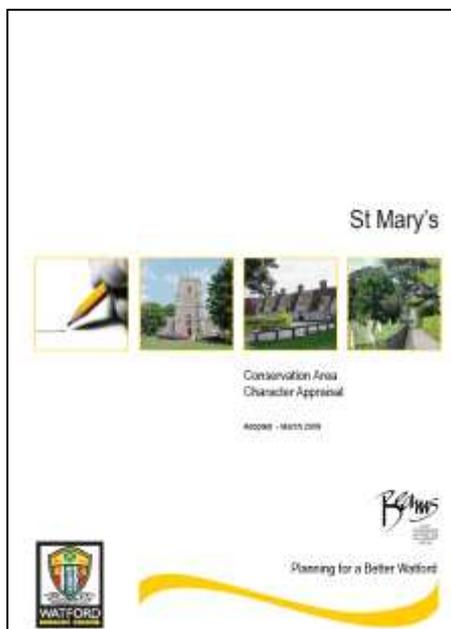
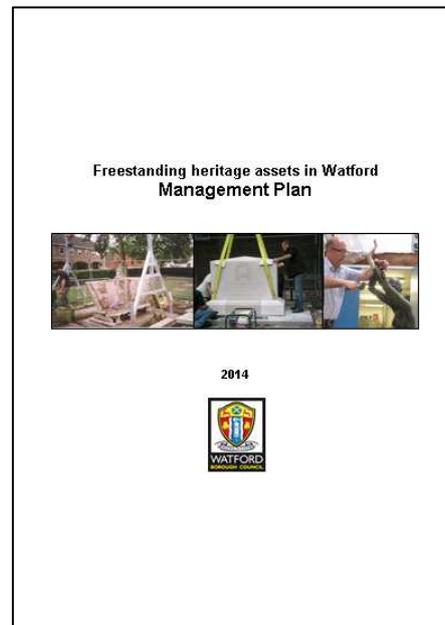
⁶ <http://www.watford.gov.uk/ccm/content/planning-and-development/locally-listed-buildings-in-watford.en>

⁷ <http://www.watford.gov.uk/ccm/content/planning-and-development/urban-design-and-built-heritage/nationally-listed-buildings-in-watford.en>

⁸ <http://www.watford.gov.uk/ccm/content/planning-and-development/urban-design-and-built-heritage/bar-report-2011.en>

6. Freestanding Heritage Assets Management Plan

- > Document provides information on management of freestanding heritage assets (e.g. war memorials).
- > Adopted in 2014.
- > Next due for review in 2019.



6. St Mary's Conservation Area Character Appraisal⁹

- > Adopted: 2009
- > Revision due: 2014

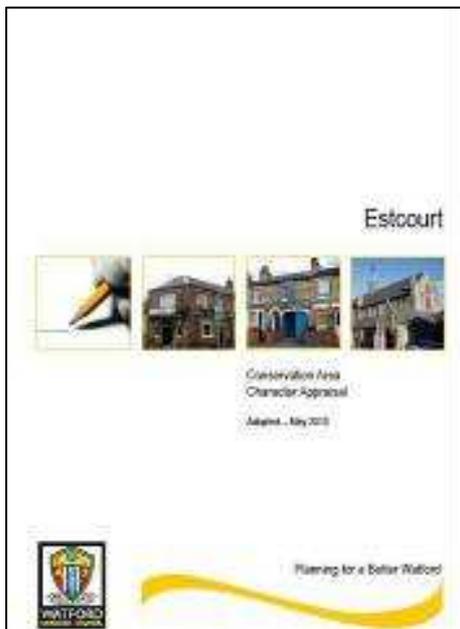


7. Civic Core Conservation Area Character Appraisal¹⁰

- > Adopted: 2009
- > Revision due: 2014

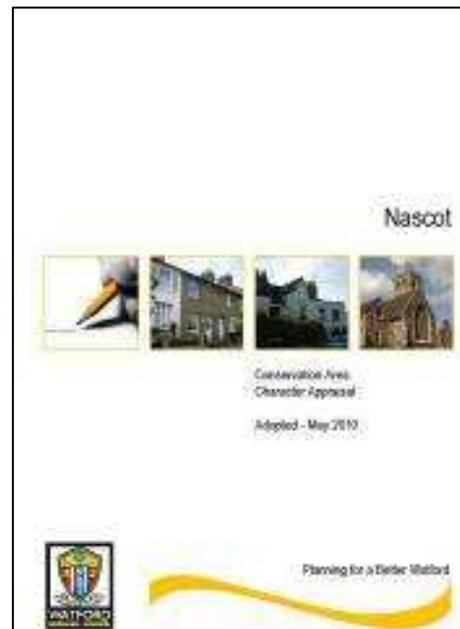
⁹ <http://www.watford.gov.uk/conservationareas>

¹⁰ [Ibid.](#)



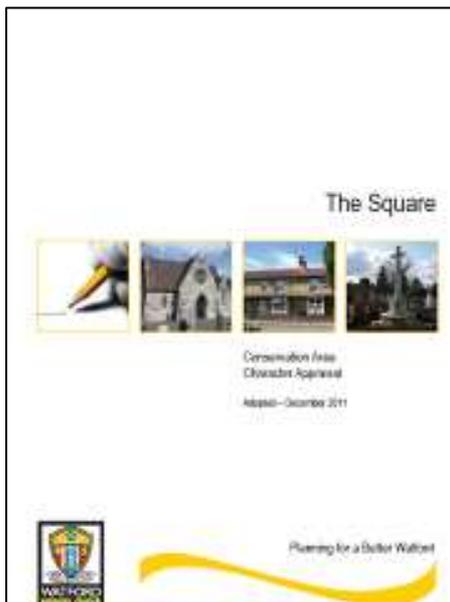
8. Estcourt Conservation Area Character Appraisal¹¹

- > Adopted: 2010
- > Revision due: 2015



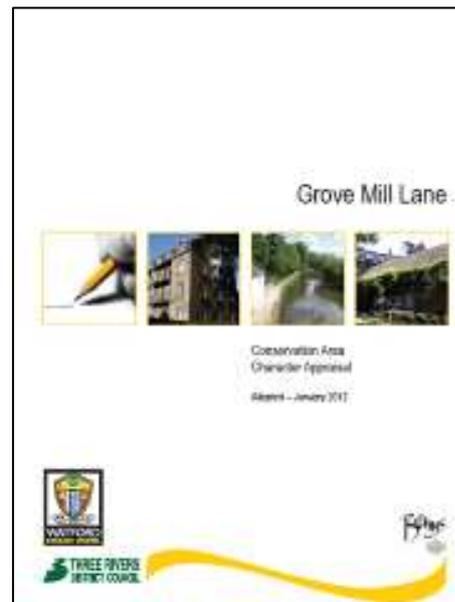
9. Nascot Conservation Area Character Appraisal¹²

- > Adopted: 2010
- > Revision due: 2015



10. The Square Conservation Area Character Appraisal¹³

- > Adopted: 2011
- > Revision due: 2016



11. Grove Mill Lane Conservation Area Character Appraisal¹⁴

- > Adopted: 2012
- > Revision due: 2017

¹¹ <http://www.watford.gov.uk/conservationareas>

¹² [Ibid.](#)

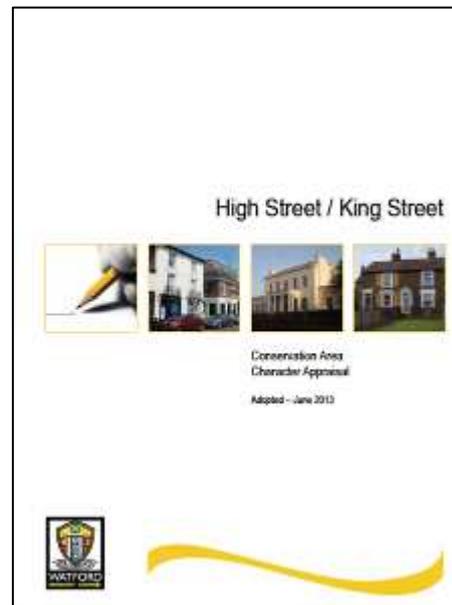
¹³ [Ibid.](#)

¹⁴ [Ibid.](#)



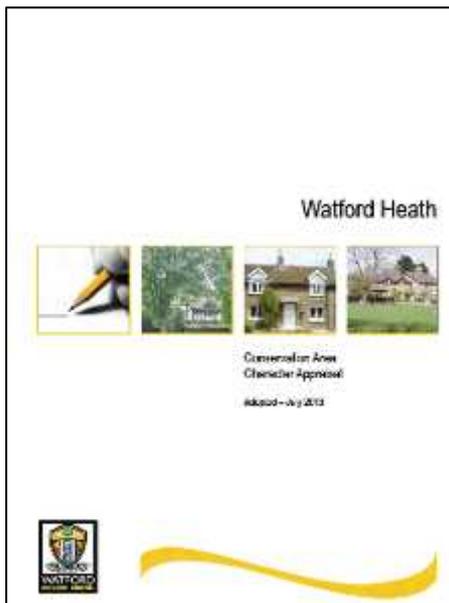
**12. Macdonnell Gardens
Conservation Area
Character Appraisal**

- > Adopted: 2012
- > Revision due: 2017¹⁵



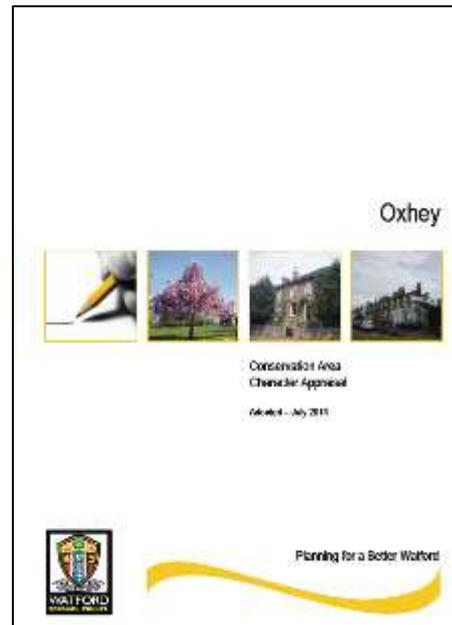
**13. High Street / King Street
Conservation Area
Character Appraisal**

- > Adopted: 2013
- > Revision due: 2018¹⁶



**14. Watford Heath Conservation
Area Character Appraisal¹⁷**

- > Adopted: 2013
- > Revision due: 2018



**15. Oxhey Conservation Area
Character Appraisal¹⁸**

- > Adopted: 2014
- > Revision due: 2019

¹⁵ [Ibid. http://www.watford.gov.uk/conservationareas](http://www.watford.gov.uk/conservationareas)

¹⁶ [Ibid.](#)

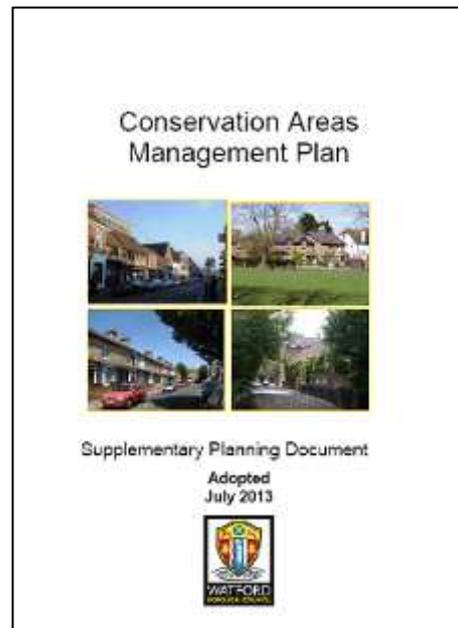
¹⁷ [Ibid.](#)

¹⁸ [Ibid.](#)

16. Conservation Areas

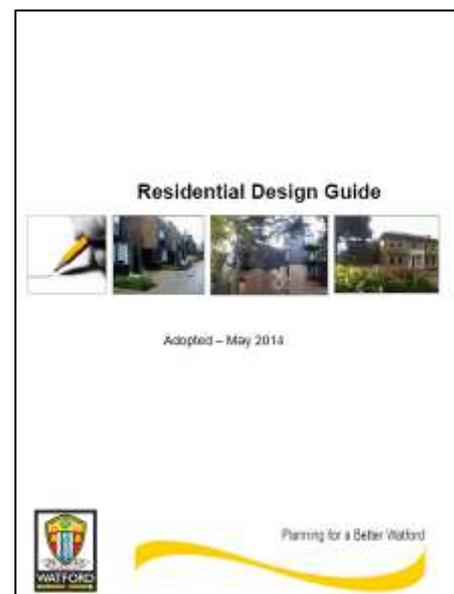
Management Plan¹⁹

- > Document provides information on the management of all 10 conservation areas in the Borough.
- > Adopted in 2013.
- > Next due for review in 2018.



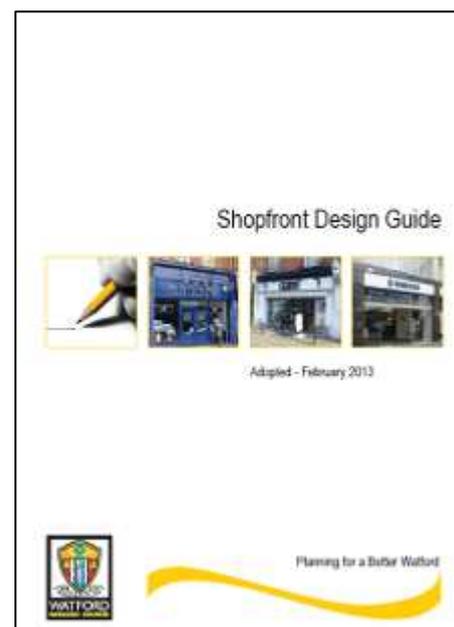
17. Residential Design Guide²⁰

- > Guidance on designing new residential dwellings and extending existing ones.
- > Adopted in 2014 (currently draft).
- > Next due for review in 2019.



18. Shopfront Design Guide²¹

- > Guidance on designing new shopfronts and altering existing ones.
- > Adopted in 2013.
- > Next due for review in 2018.



¹⁹ <http://www.watford.gov.uk/conservationareas>

²⁰ <http://www.watford.gov.uk/rdg>

²¹ <http://www.watford.gov.uk/shopfronts>

19. Streetscape Design Guide²²

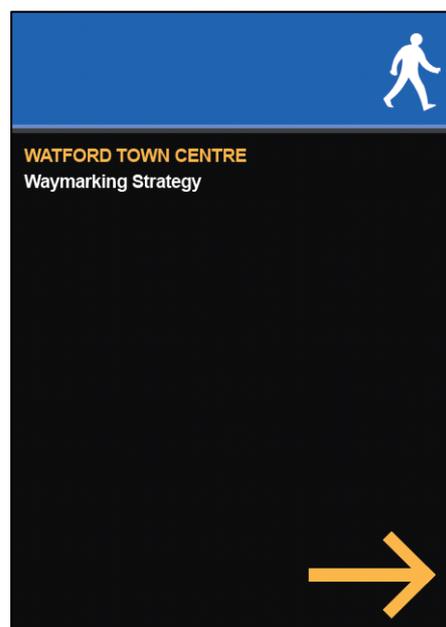
- > Guidance on designing the streetscape in the Town Centre and specifications for street furniture and floorscape materials.
- > Adopted in 2013.
- > Next due for review in 2018.



20. Watford Town Centre

Waymarking Strategy²³

- > Guidance on new directional signage in the Town Centre.
- > Adopted in 2012.
- > Next due for review in 2017.



²² <http://www.watford.gov.uk/streetscape>

²³ <http://www.watford.gov.uk/ccm/navigation/environment-and-planning/urban-design/>

6.0 Related Projects

6.1 Improving accessibility of information:

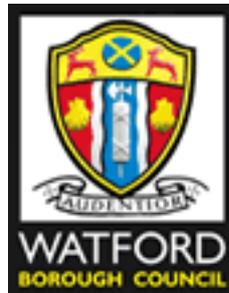
- Ensure all adopted design guides and heritage documents are available on the Watford Council website;
- Ensure information gathered as part of document development is distributed to related records (e.g. Hertfordshire Historic Environment Record);
- Ensure information on heritage assets is added to internal GIS (mapping) system;
- Ensure information on heritage assets is added to external GIS (mapping) system on Watford Council website;
- Ensure all adopted design guides and heritage documents are available in paper form in the Town Hall Reception and the two local public libraries.

6.2 Promoting urban design and conservation:

- Ensure public consultation on all design guides and heritage documents is distributed to all local stakeholders (e.g. residents' associations);
- Use Watford Borough Council's quarterly magazine to promote urban design and conservation work;
- Use Watford Borough Council's website to promote urban design and conservation work;
- Ensure press releases relating to design guides and heritage documents are sent off as appropriate;
- Organise training sessions on urban design and conservation for elected members and colleagues in related departments;
- Attend higher level meetings and give presentations on urban design and conservation work (e.g. 'One Watford' Local Strategic Partnership).

6.3 Reviewing design quality and conservation management:

- Ensure adequate monitoring regime is embedded in relevant urban design and conservation documents (e.g. Conservation Areas Management Plan).
- Contribute to Annual Monitoring Report;
- Organise annual design review sessions on major development schemes in the Borough with staff from Development Management Department;
- Update all design guides and heritage documents as timetables listed above.



This document can be made available in alternative formats including large print. The council also has staff who can verbally translate the document into a range of other languages. Please contact us on tel: 01923 226400 for more information.

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