

Watford Borough Council

Authority Monitoring Report

2024 - 2025

February 2026



WATFORD
BOROUGH
COUNCIL

Executive summary

| Monitoring Indicator | Watford Local Plan policy | Policy target | Previous Monitoring Year (MY) 2023/24 | Current MY 2024/25 | 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 | 751 Net additional dwellings (dws) | 691 Net additional dwellings (dws) | No | ↓ |
| Residential delivery within the Core Development Area | CDA2.1; CDA 2.2 CDA 2.3 | No specific target set | 136 dws (18%) | 364 dws (53%) | - | ↑ |
| Residential delivery within the Watford Gateway Strategic Development Area | CDA 2.1 | No specific target set | 0 dws (0%) | 309 dws (45%) | - | ↑ |
| Residential delivery within the Town Centre Strategic Development Area | CDA 2.2 | No specific target set | -6 dws (-1%) | 6 dws (1%) | - | ↑ |
| Residential delivery within the Colne Valley Strategic Development Area | CDA 2.3 | No specific target set | 142 dws (19%) | 49 dws (7%) | - | ↓ |
| Residential delivery on PDL | Policy SS1.1 | 80% of all development | 99% | 99% | Yes | No change |
| Number of dwellings granted permission | Policy H03.1 | 784 dpa completed, 13,328 over the plan period, maintain a 5-year supply | 859 dws | 156 dws | No | ↓ |
| Lapse Rate | Policy H03.1 | Keep lapse rate as low as possible | 3% | 79% | No | ↑ |
| Density of new development within the Core Development Area (dwellings per hectare) | Policy H03.2 | Minimum target of 95 dph within the CDA | 143dph | 283dph | Yes | ↑ |
| | | | | | | |

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| Monitoring Indicator | Watford Local Plan policy | Policy target | Previous Monitoring Year (MY) 2023/24 | Current MY 2024/25 | Target met in current MY? | Compared to previous MY |
|--|------------------------------|---|---------------------------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|-------------------------|
| Density of new residential development outside the Core Development Area (dph) | Policy H03.2 | Minimum target of 45 dwellings per hectare outside the CDA. | 84dph | 100dph | Yes | ↑ |
| Size of dwellings completed | Policy H03.2 | 20% of all completions to be family sized | 18% | 14% | No | ↓ |
| Affordable housing delivery by unit | Policy H03.3 Policy H03.4 | Specific target set by habitable room not by unit | 265 dws (35%) | 126 dws (18%) | - | ↓ |
| 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. | 444 habitable rooms (31%) | 205 habitable rooms (17%) | No | ↓ |
| Number of applications for residential conversions permitted | Policy H03.9 | No specific target set | 6 applications | 5 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 | 13 | Yes | ↑ |
| Number of student bed spaces | Policy H03.6 | No specific target set | 0 | 0 | - | No change |
| Number of build to rent and co-living rooms completed or granted | Policy H03.6 | No specific target set | - | 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 |

Executive summary

| Monitoring Indicator | Watford Local Plan policy | Policy target | Previous Monitoring Year (MY) 2023/24 | Current MY 2024/25 | Target met in current MY? | Compared to previous MY |
|--|---------------------------|--|---|---|---------------------------|-------------------------|
| 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 | 1 | 2 | - | ↑ |
| Building standards for new homes | Policy H03.10 | All new homes to comply with M4(2) accessibility standard. | 332 dwellings granted on major applications | 80 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. | 3% dwellings granted on major applications | 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. | 0 dwellings granted on major applications | 9 dwellings granted on major applications | Yes | ↑ |
| Net Industrial floorspace | Policy SS1.1 & EM4.2 | No net loss of industrial floorspace | 6,662sqm | 12,055sqm | Yes | ↑ |
| Net Office floorspace | Policy EM4.3 | No net loss of E(g)(i) class office floorspace | -5,709sqm | 17,143sqm | Yes | ↑ |
| Net delivery of employment floorspace | Policy EM4.1 | No net loss of employment floorspace | 953sqm | 29,198sqm | 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 | 6,656sqm | 12,055sqm | Yes | ↑ |
| 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 | -3,556sqm | 15,587sqm | Yes | ↑ |

Executive summary

| Monitoring Indicator | Watford Local Plan policy | Policy target | Previous Monitoring Year (MY) 2023/24 | Current MY 2024/25 | Target met in current MY? | Compared to previous MY |
|---|---------------------------|---------------------------|---|---------------------------------|---------------------------|-------------------------|
| Delivery of employment floorspace outside designated employment locations | Policy EM4.4 | No net loss of floorspace | -2,147sqm | 1,556sqm | Yes | ↑ |
| Employment land available on extant permissions | Policy EM4.1 | No specific target set | 39,094sqm | 16,116sqm | - | ↓ |
| Net delivery of retail E(a) floorspace over the monitoring year | Policy VT5.1 | No specific target set | Town Centre: 0sqm | Town Centre: 0sqm | - | ↑ |
| | | | District Centre: 0sqm | District Centre: 0sqm | | |
| | | | Local Centres: -233sqm | Local Centres: 97sqm | | |
| Net delivery of Main Town Centre uses | Policy VT5.1 | No specific target set | Town Centre: 0sqm | Town Centre: 41sqm | - | |
| | | | District Centre: 39sqm | District Centre: 0sqm | | |
| | | | Local Centres: 220sqm | Local Centres: 97sqm | | |
| Percentage of designated centres which are in Main Town Centre uses | Policy VT5.1 | No specific target set | Town Centre: <i>No data available</i> | Town Centre: 85% | - | - |
| | | | District Centre: 80% | <i>No data available</i> | | |
| | | | Local Centres: 71% | <i>No data available</i> | | |
| Vacancy rate in the designated centres | Policy VT5.1 | No specific target set | Town Centre: <i>No data available</i> | Town Centre: 9.3% | - | - |
| | | | Harlequin Shopping Centre: <i>No data available</i> | Harlequin Shopping Centre: 9.4% | | |

Executive summary

| Monitoring Indicator | Watford Local Plan policy | Policy target | Previous Monitoring Year (MY) 2023/24 | Current MY 2024/25 | Target met in current MY? | Compared to previous MY |
|--|---------------------------|--|---------------------------------------|--------------------------|---------------------------|-------------------------|
| | | | District Centre: 4.1% | <i>No data available</i> | | |
| | | | Local Centres: 5.5% | <i>No data available</i> | | |
| 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 | 21 | 30 | - | ↑ |
| Number of planning applications where Policies QD6.3 is listed as a reason for refusal | Policy QD6.3 | No specific target set | 1 | 0 | - | ↓ |
| Number of applications completed over the MY that exceed the base building heights | Policy QD6.5 | No specific target set | 4 | 3 | - | ↓ |
| Number of developments granted planning permission over the monitoring year that exceeded the base building heights | Policy QD6.5 | No specific target set | 4 | 0 | - | ↓ |
| 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 | 0 | 0 | - | No change |
| 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 |
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Executive summary

| Monitoring Indicator | Watford Local Plan policy | Policy target | Previous Monitoring Year (MY) 2023/24 | Current MY 2024/25 | Target met in current MY? | Compared to previous MY |
|---|--|---|---------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|---------------------------|-------------------------|
| 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 | 12.7% | 20.2% | Yes | ↑ |
| Percentage of non-residential developments which meet BREEAM standards | Policy CC8.2 | 100% of developments meeting either excellent or very good | 3 major applications granted | 3 major applications completed | - | No change |
| Number of new residential permissions that meet carbon emission standards | Policy CC8.1 | 19% energy efficiency above Part L of the Building Regulations. | 4 major applications granted | 17 minor & major applications granted | - | ↑ |
| Number of new homes achieving 110 litres/person/day | Policy CC8.3 | 100% of new homes | 370 | 463 | - | ↑ |
| 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 | 1 major | 12 minor & major | 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 |

Executive summary

| Monitoring Indicator | Watford Local Plan policy | Policy target | Previous Monitoring Year (MY) 2023/24 | Current MY 2024/25 | Target met in current MY? | Compared to previous MY |
|---|---------------------------|--|--|---|---------------------------|-------------------------|
| Net gain in biodiversity | Policy NE9.8 | 10% net gain | 1 major application completed | 1 major application completed | Yes | No change |
| Delivery of Infrastructure | Policy IN10.1 & IN10.2 | Deliver the infrastructure set out in the Infrastructure Delivery Plan | Progress made on a variety of IDP projects - See table 56 for full details | | Yes | - |
| Developer contributions collected | Policy IN10.3 | No specific target set | £2,592,831 (CIL) £475,166 (S106) | £789,362.42 (CIL) £4,808,949.21 (S106) | - | ↑ |
| % of new housing within 400m of a bus stop/railway station | Policy ST11.1 | No specific target set | Bus stop = 99% | Bus stop = 99% | - | No change |
| | | | Railway station = 4% | Railway station = 22% | | ↑ |
| % of developments granted with policy compliant cycle parking provision | Policy ST11.4 | 100% | 96% | 79% | 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> | | |
| % of electric vehicles within the Boroughs total car ownership | Policy ST11.5 | Improvement on baseline levels | 4,619 additional ULEV registrations | 6,522 additional ULEV registrations | Yes | ↑ |
| Number of electric vehicle spaces delivered | Policy ST11.5 | No specific target set | 459 spaces provided | 40 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> | - | - |
| | | | | | | |

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| Monitoring Indicator | Watford Local Plan policy | Policy target | Previous Monitoring Year (MY) 2023/24 | Current MY 2024/25 | Target met in current MY? | Compared to previous MY |
|--|---------------------------|--|--|--|---------------------------|-------------------------|
| % of new developments which have an active travel plan | Policy ST11.6 | Improvement on baseline levels | 100% of major applications granted | 100% of major applications granted | - | No change |
| Number of qualifying schemes with a Health Impact Assessment completed | Policy HC12.2 | All schemes over 100 dwellings | 4 out of 4 | 2 out of 2 | Yes | No change |
| Number of new community facilities approved/completed | Policy HC12.3 | No specific target set | 1 | 1 | - | No change |
| Number of community facilities lost over MY | Policy HC12.3 | No net loss | No net loss | No net loss | Yes | No change |
| Number of housing allocations permitted, started or completed over MY | Policy SA13.1 | 8,604 dwellings over the plan period | 1 permitted 2 under construction 1 completed | 0 permitted 2 under construction 2 completed | - | - |
| Number of mixed-use allocations permitted, started or completed over MY | Policy SA13.1 | 8,604 dwellings over the plan period | 2 permitted 3 under construction | 1 permitted 2 under construction 3 completed | - | - |
| Number of employment allocations permitted, started or completed over MY | Policy SA13.1 | 12,799sqm of industrial floorspace over the plan period. 19,428sqm of office floorspace over the plan period | 1 permitted 1 under construction 1 completed | 1 under construction 1 completed | - | - |
| Number of education site allocations permitted, started or completed over MY | 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.

The structure and content of an Authority Monitoring Report (AMR) is not 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 timetable for Local Plan production;
- The LPA's 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.

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

- Support growth with high quality infrastructure.

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 of the Watford Local Plan) 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 2024 to 31 March 2025**.

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 as decisions are made within the new Development Plan, and it is likely that results will fluctuate early in the plan period.

It should also be noted that many of the 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 new policies did not have 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 notify 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 transitional as applications approved against superseded policies get delivered and applications against the new Local Plan policies are approved.

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.

Following the General Election in July 2024, the Government are seeking to change the process of strategic planning. This will make it a statutory requirement in the future, but it could also change the geography of these plans. Whilst the full implications are still to be confirmed, work on the South West Herts JSP has stalled to avoid unnecessary expense and aborted work. The JSP team has been working collaboratively with districts to ensure Hertfordshire is in the best position to take forward strategic planning in the future.

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 have been 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 to produce Local Plan Documents is known as the Local Development Scheme (LDS). AMRs are required to report progress in preparing these documents during the monitoring year to meet the targets set in the LDS, and to indicate whether changes to the LDS are required.

MHCLG have committed to introducing a new plan-making system, including the introduction of National Development Management Policies, by 2026. As Watford's Plan remains up-to-date, a future Local Plan Review will occur under the new system. Once the final legislation and guidance have been published, a new LDS will be prepared and published on our website and in this section in future AMRs.

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: Developer Contributions SPD | This SPD was adopted by Full Council on 15 July 2025. The SPD provides additional guidance on the implementation of Policy HO3.3, HO3.4 and HO3.6 of the Local Plan. It explains a new method for calculating off-site contributions through commuted sums and outlines how a late-stage review will assess whether more affordable housing can be delivered after a development is largely completed. |
| Co-Living: Standards and Requirements SPD | This SPD was adopted by Full Council on 15 July 2025. The SPD provides additional guidance on the implementation of Policy HO3.6 of the Local Plan. It sets out the key standards and requirements for co-living developments to ensure they are well-designed, fit well within the community, and offer a high quality of life for residents. |
| Colne Valley Strategic Development Area SPD | The council is committed to further work to support delivery of the Colne Valley Strategic Development Area. Initial discussions are taking place. |

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 reflected the Government's standard methodology figure² for calculating local authority housing needs in Watford. As the Plan remains up to date (under five years since adoption), the Local Plan housing target remains the measure against which delivery is assessed.

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 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.

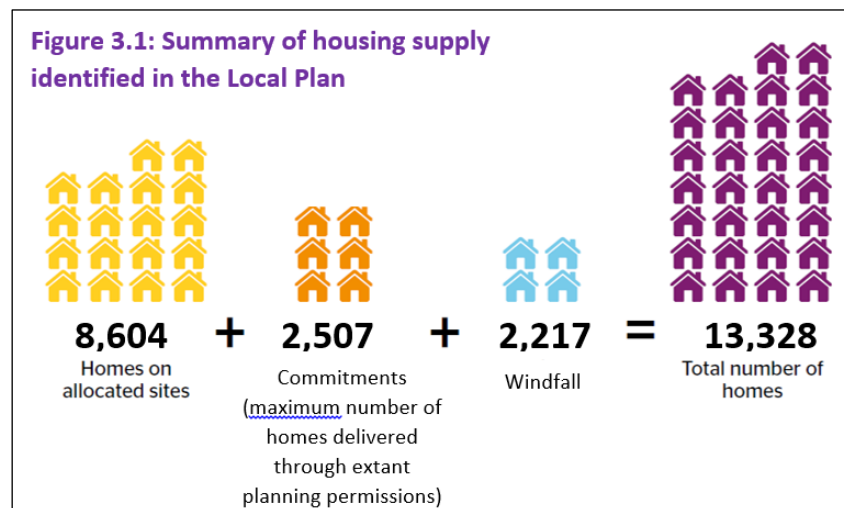


Figure 1: Housing supply identified in the Watford Local Plan- 2021-2038

Housing Trajectory

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

The main purpose of the trajectory is to support forward planning by monitoring housing delivery 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 gross and net residential delivery over the plan period to date. For some additional context, 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. More detail on past housing completions can be found in previously published AMRs on the Council's website³.

² At the time of Local Plan adoption.

³ <https://www.watford.gov.uk/planning-policy-local-plan-1/watford-local-plan/4>

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 | 710 | | 3,077 |
| Net residential completions MY | 754 | 778 | 751 | 691 | | 2,974 |

What Happened?:

In total there were 710 gross residential completions over the monitoring year, April 1st 2024 to March 31st 2025, which equated to 691 net residential completions. This represents a moderate shortfall on the Local Plan annual housing target of 784 dwellings.

It takes the total number of dwellings completed over the plan period to 2,974 (net).

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

- 170 completions at Land East of Ascot Road
- 168 completions at Hanny House, 37-39 Clarendon Road
- 141 completions at 94-98 St Albans Road

Comparisons:

The gross and net figures recorded this year represent a slight decrease in housing delivery from the previous year. However, it is still significantly higher delivery than the average prior to the Local Plan adoption.

Over 22% of the Local Plan housing target has been delivered in the first 4 years of the plan period.

Implications of the Local Plan:

Whilst there is a slight decrease on last year's completions, the delivery of 691 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 and maybe this year is the first evidence of that, as well as a reflection of external economic factors.

633 of these residential completions were on major applications (defined as applications of 10 or more dwellings), whilst 571 completions were on developments of 100 units or more. All of these were predominantly flatted development.

These types of large, flatted developments tend to result in 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 but in the meantime, it is likely that delivery will fluctuate considerably each year.

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 most recent Housing Delivery Test results were published by the Ministry for Housing Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) on 12th December 2024 accounting for the financial years 2020/21 to 2022/23. When published, these results were incorrect for Watford, reporting the Council's Housing Delivery Test result as 121%. The Council identified this error and contacted MHCLG to query the result. In response, the Council received formal notification that an error had been made on 15th January 2025. To calculate Watford's HDT percentage, the Government had used the Council's 2013 Local Plan housing requirement rather than the most recent housing requirement figure published in the newly adopted 2022 Local Plan.

The Council received a formal letter from MHCLG which set out a revised calculation which showed that the borough achieved **a score of 97%** during the most recent HDT period 2021-2023 and not 121%. This means that although the revised score reduces the percentage score relative to the incorrect figure that was published in December, it does not change the fact that **no sanctions apply**, and the Council has moved out of the presumption.

This is a significant improvement compared to previous years. In 2020, Watford's result was 48%, and 73% in 2022. At the request of MHCLG, the Council published an updated position statement in January 2025⁴, alongside the letter from MHCLG.

⁴ <https://www.watford.gov.uk/downloads/file/2472/housing-delivery-test-position-statement-2023>

Table 3: Housing Delivery Test results 2023 (dwellings)

| Number of homes required | | | Total number of homes required | Number of homes delivered | | | Total number of homes delivered | Housing Delivery Test: 2023 measurement | Housing Delivery Test: 2023 consequence |
|--------------------------|---------|---------|--------------------------------|---------------------------|---------|---------|---------------------------------|---|---|
| 2020-21 | 2021-22 | 2022-23 | | 2020-21 | 2021-22 | 2022-23 | | | |
| 524 | 784 | 781 | 2089 | 440 | 780 | 772 | 2031 | 97% | None |

Five Year Housing Supply

The five year housing land supply is an assessment of whether sufficient housing is available, achievable and deliverable in a local authority to meet its identified housing requirement over a five year period.

Since the adoption of the Local Plan, a new NPPF was published in December 2023 which removed the need for authorities with an up-to-date Local Plan to annually demonstrate a five-year housing land supply. On this basis, there was subsequently no requirement for Watford to produce an annual update of its housing supply. The published five-year supply position had therefore not changed in the borough since the agreed position in the adopted Local Plan.

However, in December 2024, the new Government published another revised NPPF which reversed the above changes, reintroducing the requirement for all authorities to annually demonstrate a five-year supply of housing. A further minor amendment to the NPPF was published in February 2025, albeit this did not affect the requirements for calculating land supply that were included in the December 2024 NPPF.

As such, the Council published a five-year housing land supply statement in May 2025⁵. It is the first update to the supply position since the Local Plan was adopted. It covers the five-year period April 2024 to March 2029 and remains the latest published position at the time of writing.

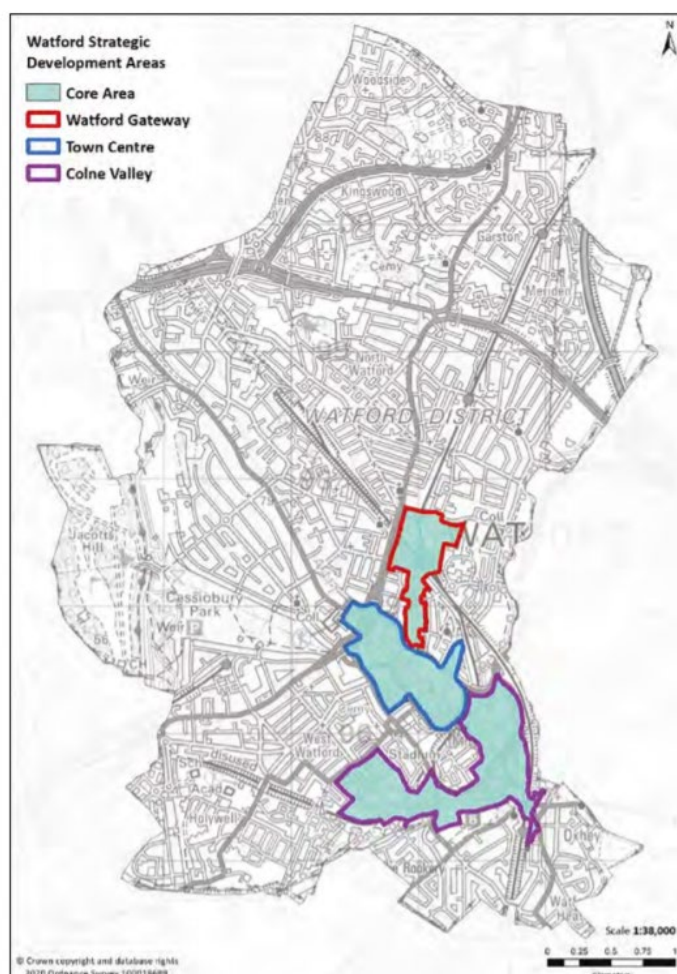
The report demonstrated that Watford has a Five Year Housing Land Supply, achieving a score of **5.44 years**. Table 4 below sets out the figures that were input into the calculation to achieve this score.

⁵ <https://www.watford.gov.uk/planning-information-1/five-year-housing-land-supply-statement>

Table 4: Inputs into Watford Borough Councils Five Year Housing Land Supply May 2025

| Element of the five-year supply | Notes | Number of dwellings to be completed by 2029 |
|---------------------------------|---|---|
| Commitments | Net extant planning permissions and prior approvals expected to be delivered by March 2029 | 2,340 |
| Site allocations | Site allocations in the adopted Local Plan expected to be delivered by March 2029 (This figure includes sites where a resolution to grant planning permission has been achieved, but the scheme remains subject to finalising Section 106 agreements) | 1,427 |
| Windfall sites | Windfall allowance for the delivery of homes up to 2028/29 that do not have extant planning permission or are a site allocation | 790 |
| Total | | 4,557 |

2024-2025 Housing Completions



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

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 5 and 6 below, break down annual residential completions into those within the CDA as a whole and then into each of the three SDAs

Figure 2: Core Development Area and Strategic Development Areas

Table 5: 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 | 364 | | 1,220 |
| | % | 49% | 45% | 18% | 53% | | 41% |
| Net residential completions outside CDA | No. | 386 | 426 | 615 | 327 | | 1,754 |
| | % | 51% | 55% | 82% | 47% | | 59% |

Table 6: 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 | 309 | | 489 |
| | % of total comps | 23% | 1% | 0% | 45% | | 16% |
| Net residential completions within the Town Centre SDA | No. | 104 | 55 | -6 | 6 | | 159 |
| | % of total comps | 14% | 7% | -1% | 1% | | 5% |
| Net residential completions within the Colne Valley SDA | No. | 93 | 288 | 142 | 49 | | 572 |
| | % of total comps | 12% | 37% | 19% | 7% | | 19% |

What Happened?:

During the monitoring year, there were 364 net residential completions within the CDA out of a total of 691 net completions. This equates to 53% of all net completions. Watford Gateway SDA saw the highest number of completions with 309 dwellings resulting from two major applications, one on St Albans Road and one on Clarendon Road.

49 completions were recorded within the Colne Valley SDA, all of which were from the Riverwell development.

6 completions were recorded in the Town Centre SDA from small scale developments on Market Street.

Comparisons:

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

This year is the first since the Local Plan was adopted where completions within the CDA outnumbered completions outside the CDA albeit from a considerably fewer number of applications.

This is positive and in line with the spatial strategy of the Local Plan to direct the majority of new housing growth to this area.

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 although this is the first time since the Local Plan adoption that delivery in the CDA outnumbered delivery outside the CDA.

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 urban brownfield sites.

Table 7: 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 | 703 | | 2,963 |
| | % | 95% | 93% | 99% | 99% | | 97% |

What Happened?:

In 2024/2025 there were 703 gross completions on PDL out of a total of 710 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 99% of all delivery was on PDL.

Over the plan period as a whole, 97% of all completions have been on PDL.

Implications for the Local Plan:

The Local Plan, and the NPPF, support 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 and this has been the case so far.

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 8 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.

Table 8: 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 | 156 | | 2,844 |
| Number of dwellings on extant permissions at the end of the MY | 4,202 | 3,569 | 3,295 | 2,534 | | N/A |

What Happened?:

Over the monitoring year 156 dwellings were granted planning permission. This takes the total number of dwellings granted over the plan period to 2,844 dwellings.

As of 31st March 2025, there were 2,534 dwellings 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 2023/2024 monitoring year, there was a substantial decrease in the number of dwellings granted permission as well as a reduction in total extant permissions. Whilst this is disappointing, it should be considered in the additional written context provided below.

Over the monitoring year, several major applications have received a resolution to grant permission at the Council's Development Management Committee subject to a signed S106 agreement. These applications are still awaiting the formal signing of a S106 agreement and so are not yet recorded in the number provided above as an extant commitment.

- **23-33 The Parade:** 141 dwellings (23/00391/FULM) - Committee approval 10th July 2024
- **Watford Police Station, Shady Lane:** 314 build to rent dwellings (24/00615/FULM) - Committee approval 4th March 2025

- **Land at Kytes Drive:** 146 dwellings (23/01097/FULM)- Committee approval originally given February 2025 and then proposal reconsidered and approved again September 2025
- **Land at Russell Lane:** 54 dwellings (23/00949/FULM) - Committee approval 3rd December 2024

These applications equate to an additional 655 dwellings which have a resolution to grant permission and should have their S106 agreements finalised over the 2025/26 monitoring year.

Implications for the Local Plan:

There remains a considerable number of extant housing permissions in the borough albeit there has been a fall over the monitoring year. It is likely that this number will fluctuate year on year and there continues to have been a step change in delivery since the new Local Plans adoption.

As referred to above, the low number of permissions granted has mainly been due to delays in getting S106 agreements in place for major applications.

It is hoped that this will be resolved over the 2025/26 monitoring year and the number of permissions granted will again increase.

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 9 below reports the number of lapsed permissions over the monitoring year, which allows comparison against the 15% figure over the plan period.

Table 9: 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 | 156 | | 2,844 |
| Number of dwellings lapsed | 62 | 32 | 28 | 123 | | 245 |
| Lapse Rate | 6% | 4% | 3% | 79% | | 23% |

Table 10 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 10: 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 | 100 | | 2,520 |
| Number of dwellings lapsed on sites of 10 or more dwellings | 39 | 0 | 0 | 97 | | 136 |
| Lapse rate on sites of 10 or more dwellings | 5% | 0% | 0% | 97% | | 26% |
| Number of dwellings granted permission on sites of less than 10 dwellings | 128 | 70 | 70 | 56 | | 324 |
| Number of dwellings lapsed on sites of less than 10 dwellings | 23 | 32 | 28 | 26 | | 109 |
| Lapse rate on sites of less than 10 dwellings | 18% | 46% | 40% | 46% | | 38% |

What Happened?:

Table 9 demonstrates that over the monitoring year, 123 dwellings previously granted planning permission were on applications that lapsed between April and March 2024-2025. These were mainly from a single major development (21/01186/OPD) for 97 dwellings. Given the low number of dwellings granted permission this year, this has resulted in a very substantial lapse rate over the year of 79% being reported.

Table 10 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 was the aforementioned lapsing of a major application for 97 dwellings. When compared to the number of dwellings granted on major developments over the year (100 dwellings), this is a lapse rate of 97%.

26 dwellings previously granted permission on minor developments lapsed during the monitoring year compared to 56 being granted. This is a lapse rate on minor development of 46%.

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 higher than this figure.

It is clear, looking at Table 9 and 10 as a whole, that this year has been an anomaly in lapse rate data compared to what has been observed over the plan period so far and historically in the borough. It results from a very low number of dwellings being approved in comparison to previous years, albeit with a substantial number approved subject to s106, and the rare lapsing of a major application.

There is likely to be variations in the lapse rate each year but it is clear that this year has reported a very significant change to previous years. This will be monitored closely over the coming years to consider its implications in a wider context.

Implications for the Local Plan:

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 issues.

Despite this, the results for this year appear anomalous when considered against the results in the first three years of the plan period. The results in subsequent years will be monitored closely to consider whether this is indeed a single year issue or whether it is reflective of any longer-term trends.

Density of Residential Completions

The 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 make best use of available land and distinguish between applications within the CDA and outside the CDA.

Table 11: 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 | 283dph | | 211dph |
| Average density of residential completions outside CDA | 95dph | 82dph | 84dph | 100dph | | 90dph |
| Overall average density of residential completions | 116dph | 122dph | 88dph | 146dph | | 118dph |

What Happened?:

Over the monitoring year the average density of new residential development completed within the CDA was 283dph compared to outside the CDA where the density was 100dph on average. Across the whole borough the average density was 146dph.

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

Inside the CDA, there were several very high-density schemes recording completions this year, including 94-98 St Albans Road with a density of nearly 500dph and 37-39 Clarendon Road with a density of over 400dph.

Outside the CDA, the highest density was the Land East of Ascot Road scheme which was over 300dph. Other development outside the CDA was much lower density.

Comparisons:

Prior to this Local Plan period, densities for new residential development in Watford 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 increased from 143dph to 283dph and is now 211dph for the plan period. Outside the CDA, densities also increased from 84dph to 100dph.

Inside and outside the CDA, the 24/25 monitoring year reported the highest average density in the plan period so far.

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 four years of the plan period these densities have been exceeded every year, and this past year has seen the highest overall density, and the highest within the CDA and outside the CDA.

It will be important to continue 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 one or two bedroom flats.

The Local Plan evidence base (South West Hertfordshire Local Housing Needs Assessment, 2020), indicated 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. As such, Policy H03.2 requires new residential development to provide at least 20% of new homes as family sized dwellings (3+ bed properties). Tables 12 and 13 show the breakdown of type and size of dwelling completed in the Borough over the monitoring year and the percentage of all completions in terms of dwelling size and type.

Table 12: 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 | 528 | | 2,687 |
| | % | 90% | 95% | 89% | 74% | | 87% |
| Bungalow | No. | 10 | 0 | 2 | 2 | | 14 |
| | % | 1% | 0% | <1% | <1% | | <1% |
| House | No. | 40 | 19 | 73 | 80 | | 212 |
| | % | 5% | 2% | 10% | 11% | | 7% |
| Studio | No. | 28 | 22 | 3 | 97 | | 150 |
| | % | 3% | 3% | <1% | 14% | | 6% |
| Other | No. | 6 | 0 | 0 | 3 | | 9 |
| | % | <1% | 0% | 0% | <1% | | <1% |

Table 13: 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 | 362 | | 1,191 |
| | % | 38% | 35% | 31% | 51% | | 39% |
| 2 bed | No. | 422 | 460 | 396 | 244 | | 1,522 |
| | % | 52% | 58% | 52% | 34% | | 49% |
| 3 bed | No. | 64 | 42 | 120 | 78 | | 304 |
| | % | 8% | 5% | 16% | 11% | | 10% |
| 4+ bed | No. | 15 | 7 | 12 | 23 | | 57 |
| | % | 2% | 1% | 2% | 3% | | 2% |

What Happened?:

Over the monitoring year 88% of all residential completions were flats, apartments, maisonettes or studio apartments. Houses and Bungalows made up 11% of all dwellings delivered over the year.

14% 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 missed over this monitoring year.

34% of all dwellings completed were two bed units, with 51% being one 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 slightly reduced compared to last year with 14% compared to 18% albeit this is still above previous trends.

The proportion of flatted development compared to houses has remained fairly stable this year with 88% in 2024-2025 compared to 89% in 2023-2024. It is interesting however to note the relative difference in mix of flats between regular flats and studios. In 2023-2024 studios made up less than 1% of the total completions, this year it is 14% with the percentage defined as flats reducing from 89% to 74%.

Implications for the Local Plan:

The Local plan targets for family sized dwellings has been missed in this monitoring year, with 14% delivered compared to the 20% target, although this does represent an increase on recent trends.

The provision of family sized units is a key element of meeting the housing needs of the Borough and so it is important to monitor this going forward.

The vast majority of completions recorded over the Plan period so far 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 in the past two years. 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 Local Plan (Policy H03.3) sets a target of 35% affordable housing by habitable room on residential developments of 10 or more dwellings. 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 over providing one or two 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 14, 15 and 16 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 by tenure. They consider affordable housing delivery both by number of units and by habitable room.

Table 14: 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 | 126 | | 736 |
| % of all net completions | 33% | 12% | 35% | 18% | | 25% |

Table 15: 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 | 205 | | 845 |
| % of all net completions | No data | 14% | 31% | 17% | | 21% |

Table 16: 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 | 8 | | 91 |
| | % | 10% | 32% | 9% | 6% | | 14% |
| Affordable rented | No. | 229 | 49 | 89 | 75 | | 442 |
| | % | 75% | 52% | 33% | 60% | | 55% |
| Intermediate and Shared Ownership | No. | 44 | 15 | 153 | 43 | | 255 |
| | % | 15% | 16% | 58% | 34% | | 31% |
| Discounted Market | No. | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | | 0 |
| | % | 0% | 0% | 0% | 0% | | 0% |

What Happened?:

Over the monitoring year 126 affordable dwellings were completed in the borough, equal to 18% of all completions by unit, and 17% by habitable room. This fell short of the 35% target in Policy HO3.3 of the Local Plan.

Of these affordable completions, 6% were social rent compared to the local requirement of 60%, whilst 60% were affordable rented; and 34% were shared ownership or intermediate tenure. Like previous monitoring years, there were no discounted market dwellings completed.

Comparisons:

This monitoring year saw a lower number of affordable dwellings than the previous year although it was higher than that which was recorded in 2022/2023.

The amount of social rent and shared ownership delivery has decreased this monitoring year, with more affordable rent compared to previous monitoring years.

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 and by unit, affordable housing delivery this year was below the Local Plan target. This is disappointing given the acute need for affordable housing in the borough and the increase reported last year. It should be noted however that affordable housing provision is subject to viability and so is affected by national economic trends which are out of the control of planning policy or development management.

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

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

Residential Conversions

Table 17 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.

The table below 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.

Table 17: 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 granted | 14* | 2 | 6 | 5 | | 13 |
| Number of conversions of residential units into a large House in Multiple Occupation (HMO) of over 6 occupants | No data available this year. Data will be reported in subsequent AMRs | No data available this year. Data will be reported in subsequent AMRs | 3 | 3 | | 6 |

*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.

What Happened?:

Over the monitoring year, 5 applications were granted permission for the conversion of existing residential dwellings. These permissions will result in an overall net gain of 11 dwellings.

3 residential units were granted permission for the conversion of dwellings into larger HMOs. These applications are located on Amberley Terrace, Westland Road and Chester Road.

Comparisons:

The number of applications granted for residential conversions is similar in 2024/2025 compared to the previous monitoring year as is the net gain in dwellings resulting from these conversions (12 dwellings in 2023/2024 compared to 11 dwellings in 2024/2025).

The same number of large HMO applications were granted permission in the 2024/2025 monitoring year as in the 2023/2024 monitoring 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 resultant 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 18: 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 | 13 | | 0 |
| Number of specialist and care home beds lost | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | | 0 |

Table 19 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 19: 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 beds |
|---------------------|--|----------------|
| 25/00038/COU | C3 to C2 Children's Residential Home | 3 |
| 25/00039/COU | C3 to C2 Children's Residential Home | 3 |
| 22/00612/FUL | Hotel use to 7 bed to care home | 7 |
| Total | | 13 |

What Happened?:

Over the monitoring year, there was a net gain of 13 specialist care or extra care bed spaces.

6 of these bed spaces resulted from the conversion of C3 dwellings to Children's care homes.

The remaining 7 bed spaces resulted from the conversion of a hotel into a care home.

Additionally, there were 51 flexi care units completed at 147 York Way as part of application 20/00178/FULM though these are not recorded in Table 18 as delivery of specialist housing bedspaces but they are considered worthy of note in this supporting text.

Comparisons:

This is the first year of the plan period which has reported any specialist housing or extra care bedspaces being completed. It is positive to see that specialist housing is being delivered to support those residents in particular need.

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 and across Hertfordshire. 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 were no 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 20: 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 | | 0 |
| Number of student bed spaces approved | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | | 0 |

What Happened?:

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

Comparisons:

There have been no gains and losses of student accommodation in the plan period to date.

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.

Build to Rent and Co-living

A new indicator has been added to the 24/25 AMR which will report future delivery of any build to rent or co-living developments.

Co-living is a new form of purpose shared living for which there has been growing interest in the borough. Over the 24/25 monitoring year, there has been significant interest from developers in delivering such schemes. This has resulted in some live applications which are due to be determined over the next monitoring year.

Over the monitoring year, the policy team has completed work on a Co-Living: Standards and Requirements SPD⁶ which will provide greater clarity on how co-living developments should be planned for and decided upon in Watford. This SPD was adopted just after the monitoring year in July 2025. This adds necessary detail to Policy HO3.6 of the Local Plan which sets the high-level framework by which co-living schemes will be assessed.

Table 21 will report the number of build to rent units delivered and granted and the number of co-living rooms granted and completed. As this is a new indicator, it is formatted slightly differently from other indicators in that the first year shown in the table is the 2024/25 monitoring year.

Table 21: Number of build to rent units and co-living rooms completed or approved

| | 2024/2025 | 2025/2026 | 2026/2027 | 2027/2028 | 2028/2029 | Total |
|---|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-------|
| Number of build to rent units completed | 0 | | | | | 0 |
| Number of build to rent units approved | 0 | | | | | 0 |
| Number of co-living rooms completed | 0 | | | | | 0 |
| Number of co-living rooms approved | 0 | | | | | 0 |

What Happened?:

Over the monitoring year there were no gains or losses of build to rent or co-living units.

⁶ <https://www.watford.gov.uk/downloads/file/2727/co-living-standards-and-requirements-spd-final->

Comparisons:

This is the first year in which this indicator is being considered. There have been no previous co-living developments granted or completed in the borough.

Implications for the Local Plan:

The SPD that was in July 2025 builds on Policy HO3.6 of the Local Plan and should provide additional helpful guidance against which proposals for co-living will be considered going forward. This directly responds to a significant increase in interest for such development in Watford since the Local Plans adoption.

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 other proposals for Gypsy and Traveller accommodation will be assessed.

Over the monitoring year requests were made from neighbouring councils to respond to their Gypsy and Traveller Assessments and raise any cross boundary issues. This was being done to support their local plan submissions and examinations. Watford raised no cross boundary issues in response to these.

Table 22: 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 | | 0 |
| Number of Gypsy and Traveller pitches approved | 0 | 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 23: Number of people seeking to acquire plots that are registered on the authorities' self-build register

| Number on the register as of 31/3/2025 | Number added over the monitoring year |
|--|---------------------------------------|
| 43 | 5 |

Table 24: 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 | | 0 |
| Number of CIL exemptions for self-build granted | 2 | 5 | 3 | 3 | | 13 |
| Number of Self and Custom Build units completed | 0 | 0 | 1 | 2 | | 3 |

What Happened?:

There were 43 people on the self-build register as of the end of the monitoring year, an increase of five on the previous 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 will likely only be an indication of demand. In reality, there may be others who have not registered with the Council 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 24 shows that over the monitoring year there were three CIL exemptions granted for self-build over the monitoring year as well as two self build completions.

Comparisons:

In the 2024/25 monitoring year there were 5 additional requests received and added to the self-build register compared to two additions in the 2023/2024 monitoring year.

There were two self or custom build units completed and there were three self-build CIL exemptions granted. This is broadly aligned with results over the plan period so far and mirrors what was reported in 2023/2024.

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 are likely to 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.

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 25: 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 | 89 dwellings granted on major applications | | 431 |
| | % meeting space standard | | | 100% | 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 | 80 dwellings granted on major applications | | 412 |
| | % meeting M4(2) standard | | | 100% | 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 | 9 dwellings granted on major applications | | 19 |
| | % meeting M4(3) standard | | | 3% | 10% | | |
| 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 | 9 dwellings granted on major applications | | 9 |

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, one residential major application was allowed at appeal (22/01226/FULM). This application is compliant with National Space Standards and M4(2) accessibility standards and thus the local plan requirement, it also achieved a 10% provision of M4(3) dwellings. The 9 M4(3) dwellings are also considered to be dementia friendly as the entrances are defined and legible, and the maximum of 8 dwellings per core would make the layout easy to navigate.

Comparisons:

This is the second year that data has been available for this indicator and it is positive to see the level of compliance with the standards. The indicator will continue to be reported over the coming years to assess levels of compliance over a longer timeframe.

Implications for the Local Plan:

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

It will be important therefore 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.

3. Employment and the Economy

The following indicators present a range 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 refer to 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, the demolition 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 (PD). 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 confirmed 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 DLUHC⁷ who requested additional information from the Council.

SoS intervention 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 rather than aligning entirely with the Clarendon Road Primary Office Location boundary. The industrial areas meanwhile 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 Watford's dense, residential, urban

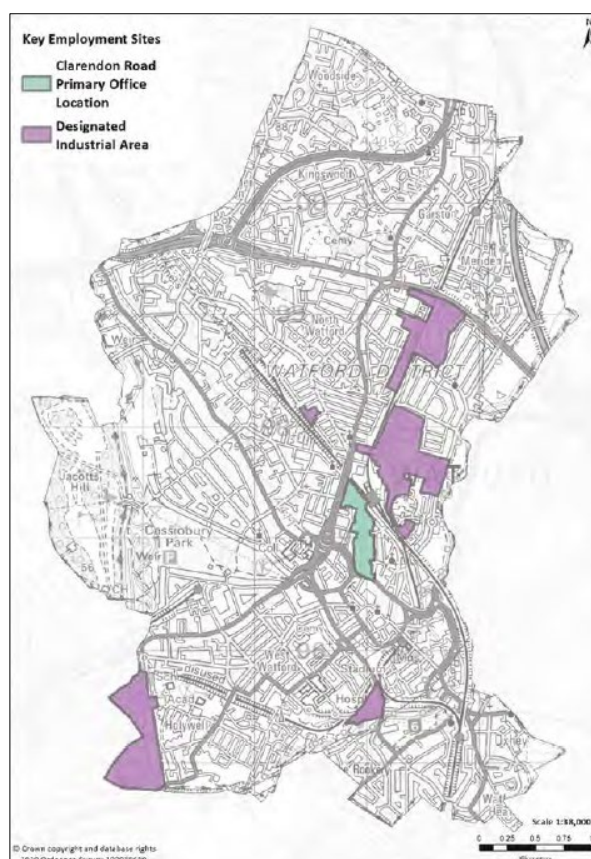


Figure 3: Locations of designated industrial and office areas in the Watford Local Plan

⁷ DLUHC has subsequently become known as MHCLG

character and the lack of suitable sites available for these uses.

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

Table 26: 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 27: 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 to 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.

The Study highlighted that, despite national challenges, South West Herts has continued to demonstrate 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. It shows demand for high-quality offices in main office markets like central Watford and St Albans albeit this is unlikely to offset the fall in demand for larger office space outside these areas. The Study reiterates that Clarendon Road is likely to remain a sub regional hub for office floorspace in South West Herts.

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 including 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 takes 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 28: 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 | 1,711 | | 2,525 |
| B8 (Storage and Distribution) | -2,121 | 42 | 3,294 | 6,732 | | 7,947 |
| E(g)(i) (Offices) | 15,507 | -6,399 | -5,709 | 17,143 | | 20,542 |
| E(g)(ii) (Research and Development) | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1,806 | | 1,806 |
| E(g)(iii) (Industrial Processes) | -1,744 | -503 | 1,016 | 1,806 | | 575 |
| Mixed E Class | -64 | -7,297 | 0 | 0 | | -7,361 |
| Total | 10,364 | -14,481 | 953 | 29,198 | | 26,034 |

What Happened?:

There was an overall net gain of 29,198 sqm of employment floorspace over the monitoring year. This gain was spread across each employment typology with a gain recorded against all use classes.

This was largely due to the delivery of two developments:

- 22/00727/VARM - Hanny House 37 and 39 Clarendon Road (Mixed use development comprising 15,294 sqm of office space and 168 dwellings)
- 21/00971/FULM – Land at Clive Way (Demolition of existing industrial buildings and construction of three buildings to provide industrial units). This application was

recorded as a loss of Mixed E Class Use in 2022/23. It has been redeveloped as B2, B8, E(g)(i), E(g)(ii) and E(g)(iii) use.

Comparisons:

Over this monitoring year, there has been a significant gain in employment floorspace compared to the previous 2 monitoring years. This is due to the completion of two significant redevelopments. It is positive to see the diversity of employment uses being reported with all use classes recording a net gain albeit office uses still dominated delivery over the monitoring year.

This is the first year in the plan period that a gain of E(g)(ii) Research and Development use has been reported.

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:

It is encouraging to see a variety of employment land uses being delivered over this monitoring year.

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.

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 reported in each year so far. However, it is clear from the data this year that losses recorded in previous years as a result of redevelopment schemes are starting to be built out and completed.

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)(ii) and 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 29: 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 | 1,711 | | 2,223 |
| B8 (Storage and Distribution) | -2,121 | 0 | 3,288 | 6,732 | | 7,899 |
| E(g)(ii) (Research and Development) | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1,806 | | 1,806 |
| E(g)(iii) (Industrial Processes) | -1,342 | 0 | 1,016 | 1,806 | | 1,480 |
| Mixed E Class | 0 | -7,297 | 0 | 0 | | -7,297 |
| Total | -4,863 | -7,737 | 6,656 | 12,055 | | 6,111 |

What Happened?:

Over the monitoring year there was a net gain of 12,055 sqm of B2, B8, E(g)(ii) and E(g)(iii) floor space within the designated industrial areas.

This means that throughout this monitoring year, 100% of B2, B8, E(g)(ii) and E(g)(iii) floorspace delivered was located within the designated industrial areas.

Comparisons:

The net gain in delivery of employment floorspace in the designated industrial area follows the positive trend of the previous year. Sites that were recorded as losses in monitoring years 2021/22 and 2022/23 are now being built out, resulting in the substantial net gain delivered in this monitoring year.

This is positive to see as it shows the designated industrial areas are remaining viable and attractive locations for businesses and that industrial uses are being delivered in the most appropriate areas.

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.

This indicator is important to determine whether any losses continue to be a result of redevelopment 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. The trend over the previous two monitoring years supports that the losses within the designated industrial areas are being recovered through redevelopment.

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 30 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 30: 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 | 15,587 | | 33,346 |
| Net E(g)(i) class office floor space delivered within the Town Centre | -5,235 | 0 | -776 | 0 | | -5,794 |
| Totals | 15,235 | 69 | -3,556 | 15,587 | | 27,552 |

What Happened?:

Over the monitoring year, there was a net gain of 15,587 sqm of office floorspace delivered within the Clarendon Road Primary Office Space. There was no office floorspace delivered within the Town Centre.

The delivery within the Primary Office Location was largely due to the completion of the Clarendon Works at 37-39 Clarendon Road (22/00727/VARM) which delivered 15,294 sqm of office floor space.

There was no reported loss of office floorspace over the monitoring year.

Comparisons:

The delivery of office floorspace is significantly higher than the previous two monitoring years. It is positive to see that high quality office development on Clarendon Road is being delivered as part of office led mixed use development. There are multiple redevelopment schemes that have been granted and commenced on Clarendon Road which may provide a pipeline of new, high-quality office floorspace to support the continuing growth of the area as a sub-regional office hub. These are reported in Table 33 of this report.

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 designated employment 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 or with permission along Clarendon Road. As seen this year, these are starting to be delivered and will continue to do so over the coming years.

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 31: 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 | 1,556 | | -6,607 |

Table 32: 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 | 0 | | 302 |
| B8 (Storage and Distribution) | 0 | 42 | 6 | 0 | | 48 |
| E(g)(ii) (Research and Development) | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | | 0 |
| E(g)(iii) (Industrial Processes) | -402 | -503 | 0 | 0 | | -905 |
| Total | -216 | -345 | 6 | 0 | | -555 |

What Happened?:

Over the monitoring, there was a net gain of 1,556sqm office floorspace outside of the Primary Office Location and the Town Centre. This gain was a result of the mixed-employment use development at Land at Clive Way (21/00971/FULM), which saw the redevelopment of existing industrial units within the designated industrial area.

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 no net gain or loss has been reported.

This was the first year since the 2021/22 monitoring year that a net gain in office floorspace was delivered outside the Primary Office Location. This means 9% of all office floorspace delivered across the borough over the monitoring year was outside the Town Centre or Clarendon Road. That said, the 9% delivered was within a designated industrial area.

Implications for the Local Plan:

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

It will 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 33: Employment floor space available in Watford (with planning permission, not yet implemented or completed) (sqm)

| Use class | 2021/2022 | 2022/2023 | 2023/2024 | 2024/2025 | 2025/2026 |
|-------------------------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| B2 (General Industrial) | 4,469 | 5,056 | -3,156 | -4,563 | |
| B8 (Storage and Distribution) | 3,220 | 4,380 | 9,743 | 3,786 | |
| E(g)(i) (Offices) | 25,416 | 26,160 | 27,617 | 15,979 | |
| E(g)(ii) (Research and Development) | 250 | -428 | 2,484 | 792 | |
| E(g)(iii) (Industrial Processes) | 3,170 | 13,599 | 2,406 | 11 | |
| Mixed E Class | 6,989 | 5,165 | 0 | 111 | |
| Total | 43,514 | 53,932 | 39,094 | 16,116 | |

What Happened?:

Currently, there is a total of 16,116 sqm of employment floorspace available, taking into account all planning permissions that have not yet been implemented. Whilst this is much lower than previous years, it is a significant amount of committed employment floorspace that should provide a good supply going forward.

By far the largest amount of floorspace available is in E(g)(i) Class office use, which accounts for over 99% of all floorspace available.

Additionally, there is an extant application 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.

Comparisons:

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

There has been a high level of employment floorspace completed this year. It is positive to see that the developments that have been granted permission are being built out.

Implications for the Local Plan:

There is a good 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.

It is important to monitor this indicator over the coming years to see whether there is a further decline in permitted employment floorspace, or whether this will fluctuate on a similar basis to housing.

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 can 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 34: 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) |
| None | None |

What Happened?:

Over the monitoring there were no formal training schemes secured as a result of new development through a Section 106 agreement.

Comparisons:

It is disappointing not to have seen any training schemes or apprenticeships secured this monitoring year however this is likely due to the limited number of major applications granted this monitoring year. There was only one major planning application allowed at appeal over this monitoring year.

There are 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 years. This piece of work is being developed in collaboration with Hertfordshire Futures and neighbouring districts.

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

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

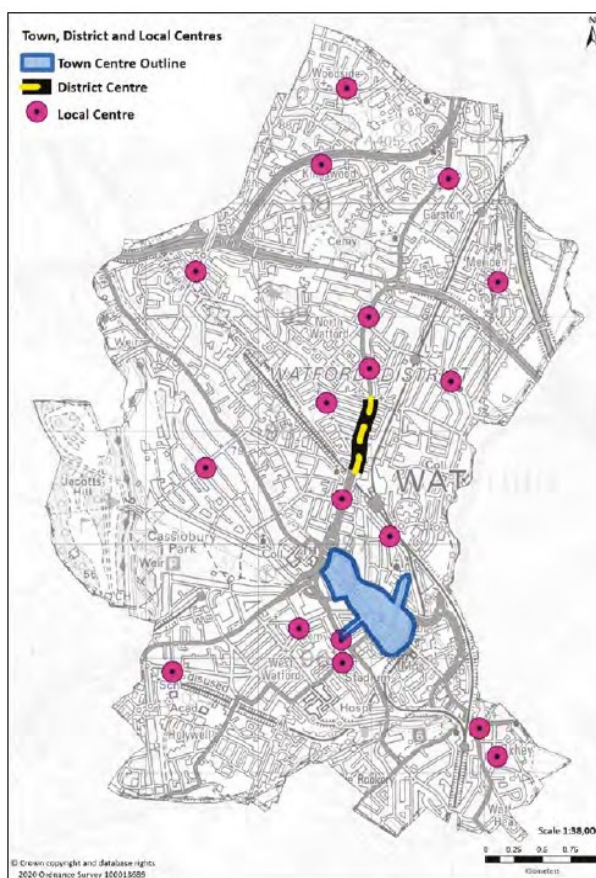


Figure 4: The location of the designated Town Centre, District Centre and Local Centres

over the plan 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 35 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 35: 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 | 0 | | 855 |
| District Centre | 0 | 58 | 0 | 0 | | 58 |
| Local Centres | -163 | 98 | -233 | 97 | | -201 |
| Outside Centres | 126 | -175 | 108 | 365 | | 474 |
| Total | 674 | 125 | -125 | 462 | | 1,186 |

What Happened?:

Over the monitoring year there was a net gain of 462sqm in Class E(a) retail floorspace across the borough. A net gain of 97sqm of retail floorspace occurred within the designated Local Centres. Outside of the designated centres there was a gain of 365sqm. There was no change in both the District Centre and Town Centre.

Comparisons:

There was a net gain of retail floorspace this year compared to last. There was no net loss of retail floor space within the borough over this monitoring year. Like last monitoring year, there was no change in retail floorspace in the Town and District centres, this is not to say that there was no gain or loss of Main Town Centre floorspace. This is reported in table 36.

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 36 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 35 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 36: 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 | 41 | | -2,702 |
| District Centre | 0 | 175 | 39 | 0 | | 214 |
| Local Centres | -163 | 46 | 220 | 97 | | 200 |
| Total | -3,911 | 1,226 | 259 | 138 | | -2,288 |

What Happened?:

Over the monitoring year, there was a net gain of 138sqm of Main Town Centre Use floorspace within designated centres. This included a net gain of 97sqm within the Local Centres and a net gain of 41sqm within the Town Centre. There was no net gain or loss in the District Centre.

The net gain reported in the Town Centre was due to an extension to an existing restaurant (24/00634/FUL). The net gain reported in the Local Centre was wholly due to a single application (20/00178/FULM) for the construction of 62 new dwellings, a hairdressers and community hub.

Comparisons:

Although the overall net gain has decreased since the last monitoring year, it is positive to see that there has again been a net gain in Main Town Centre uses across the borough this monitoring year.

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 37 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 Local and District Centres was conducted in 2024 and was reported over the last monitoring year.

Table 37: % of each centre that are Main Town Centre uses

| Location | 2021/2022 | 2022/2023 | 2023/2024 | 2024/2025 | 2025/2026 |
|-----------------|--|--|--|--|-----------|
| 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> | 85% | |
| 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% | <i>No data available this year. Data will be reported in subsequent AMRs</i> | |
| 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% | <i>No data available this year. Data will be reported in subsequent AMRs</i> | |

What Happened?:

A survey of the town centre was completed just after the monitoring year ended. 85% of units in the Town Centre were reported as being within a Main Town centre use as defined in the NPPF.

No new data was available this year for the District and Local Centres. This data will be reported in subsequent AMRs.

Comparisons:

There is continues to be a high proportion of Main Town Centre units in the Town Centres. This has marginally increased since the 2022/2023 monitoring year.

A retail survey for the Local and District Centres was not conducted this year, data will be reported in subsequent AMRs.

Implications for the Local Plan:

It is positive to see that the Town Centre has 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 38 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 38: 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> | 38 units | |
| | % | - | 7.4% | - | 9.3% | |
| Harlequin 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> | 14 units | |
| | % | - | 13.4% | - | 9.4% | |
| 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 | <i>No data available this year. Data will be reported in subsequent AMRs</i> | |
| | % | - | - | 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 | <i>No data available this year. Data will be reported in subsequent AMRs</i> | |
| | % | - | - | 5.5% | - | |
| Total | No. | - | 44 units | 31 units | 52 units | |
| | % | - | 8.9% | 5.6% | 9.3% | |

What Happened?:

The retail surveys conducted within the Town Centre and Harlequin Shopping Centre this monitoring year reported similar vacancy rates of 9.3% and 9.4% respectively.

There was no data available for the vacancy rates in the District and Local Centres.

Comparisons:

Vacancy in the Town Centre has increased marginally since the last reported data in 2022/2023, by 1.9%. Vacancy in the Harlequin Shopping Centre has decreased by 4%.

There was no data available for the vacancy rates in the District and Local Centres to compare to previous monitoring years. This data will be reported in subsequent monitoring years.

Implications for the Local Plan:

It is positive 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 Town Centre and Harlequin Shopping Centre. 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 internal and external design is crucial in creating successful and attractive places for people to live. This can help to create a safe, attractive and sustainable borough that improves the health and wellbeing of all 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 include 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) in recent years. A key issue in the preparation of the new Local Plan was therefore how high-density development can best 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 25 of the housing chapter which outlined the extent to which internal space and accessibility standards were being met, and table 11 of the housing chapter which sets out the average density of new residential development in the borough.

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 future growth 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 above. 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 39 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 39: Number of applications where policy QD6.2 (design principles) or QD6.4 (building design) are listed as a reason for refusal

| Use Classes | 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 | 22 | | 42 |
| 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 | | 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 | 5 | | 6 |
| 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 | 3 | | 3 |
| Total | | | 21 | 30 | | 51 |

What Happened?:

22 applications for new residential development had QD6.2 or QD6.4 listed as a reason for refusal. All these applications were for minor developments.

Five applications for commercial Class E Use had QD4.2 and QD4.6 listed as reasons for refusal.

Three applications for other uses, including for sui generis use and a hotel also had QD4.2 and QD4.6 listed as a reason for refusal.

Comparisons:

The distribution of results across the use classes is broadly similar to 2023/24 and over the plan period over 50 applications have been refused wholly or partially because they did not adhere to the Plans design quality policies. It is positive to see that policies QD4.2 and QD4.6 remain strong policies for ensuring high quality design across the borough by resisting inappropriate development.

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 its surrounding public realm.

Table 40 below reports the number of new build applications where policy QD6.3 is listed as a reason for refusal.

Table 40: 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 | 0 | | 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 | | 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 | | 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 | | 0 |
| Total | | | 1 | 0 | | 1 |

What Happened?:

Over the monitoring year, no refused applications had policy QD6.3 listed as a reason for refusal.

Comparisons:

Last year, there was one residential application with policy QD6.3 listed as a reason for refusal. Over this monitoring year, there have been no applications refused for this reason, this is likely due to there being no major planning applications refused. Public realm provision is most likely to be delivered on major schemes. It may also be the case that QD6.2 is being used as the basis for refusal rather than QD6.3 where public realm related issues have been identified.

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 2024 to 2025 monitoring year, the following public realm projects were completed:

- **St Mary's Churchyard** - Updated surfacing, new paving, and enhanced entrance features have improved the look and feel of the space. Raised planters, bee hotels, and birdhouses have been added to increase biodiversity.
- **St Albans Road improvements** – Works to upgrade the west carriageway footpath from Langley Road to Lowestoft Road. Improvements included high-quality paving, replacing of damaged safety railing and new road markings.
- **River Colne restoration** - Works at Waterfields Recreation Ground to reconnect the floodplain, enhance flow diversity and create wildflower beds
- **The Green Loop** – Improvements include increasing the width of the shared use paths in Oxhey Park and Cassiobury Park, providing more space for people to enjoy. The wayfinding signs have also been installed along the entire route to improve navigation for pedestrians and cyclists.

Building Height

Building height is an important issue for the borough, both for local residents and for the council. There has been a growing number of 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 41 and 42 present two sets of data relating to building height. Table 41 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, table 42, reports the number of applications that were granted permission over the monitoring year despite being above the base building heights.

Table 41: Applications completed over the monitoring year that are in excess of the base building heights

| Core Development Area (CDA)/Not Core Development Area | 2024/2025 |
|---|------------|
| Not CDA | 170 comps |
| | 24 storeys |
| Watford Gateway SDA | 168 comps |
| | 25 storeys |
| Not CDA | 127 comps |
| | 5 storeys |

What Happened?:

Table 41 shows that there were three 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). There were two outside the CDA (Courtlands Cassiobury, Ascot Road and Marchwood House, St Albans Road) and one within the CDA (37-39 Clarendon Road). In total these delivered 465 dwellings.

Comparisons:

Last monitoring year, there were four permissions completed that were above the base building heights. All four were outside the CDA, delivering a total of 55 dwellings and were 5 or 6 storeys.

The trend is different this year, with two of the three applications being 24 storeys. These applications were however approved before the plan period.

Implications for the Local Plan:

Similar to the previous monitoring year, all permissions in table 41 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 and sustainability benefits.

Table 42: Applications granted planning permission that are over the base building heights

| Core Development Area (CDA)/Not Core Development Area | 2024/2025 |
|---|-----------|
| None | N/A |
| | |

What Happened?:

Over the monitoring year, no applications were approved that were in excess of the base building heights set out in policy QD6.5.

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. As discussed in table 8, several major applications have received a resolution to grant permission at the council's Development Management Committee subject to a signed S106 agreement. These applications will be reported on in subsequent monitoring reports.

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 43 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 43: 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 | | 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 | | 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 | | 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 | | 0 |
| Total | | | 0 | 0 | | 0 |

What Happened?:

No applications refused over the monitoring year had policy QD6.5 (building height) listed as a reason for refusal.

Comparisons:

Comparably to the last monitoring year, there were no applications refused based on policy QD6.5. It is too early in the plan period to determine whether applications for proposed developments over the base building height continue to be of outstanding quality and provide substantial public benefit.

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.

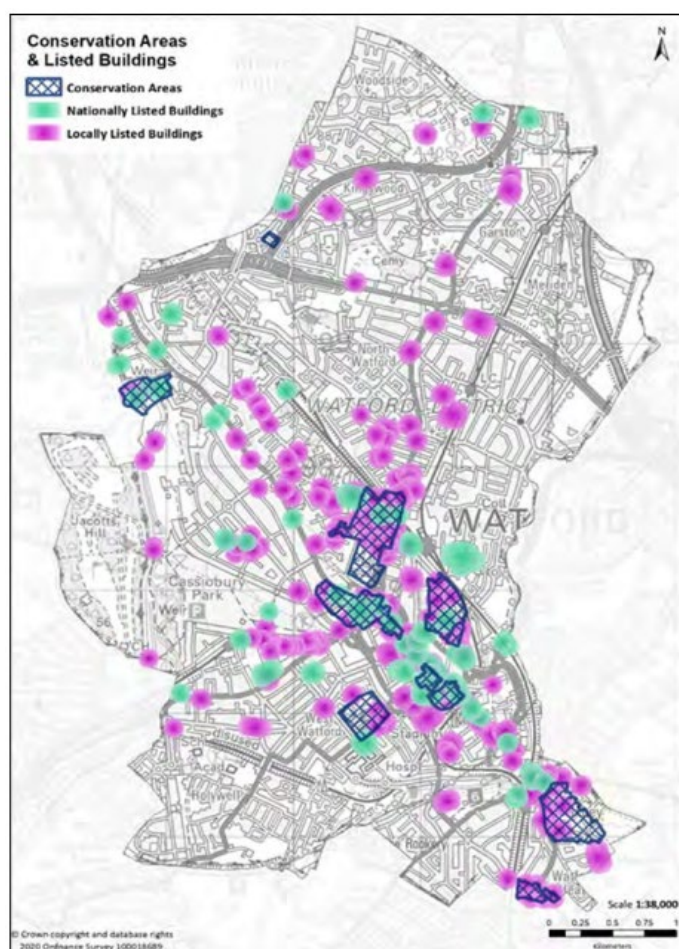


Figure 6: Heritage assets in Watford

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.

The AMR monitors the impacts of new development on the historic environment, as well as reporting 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?:

Resourcing constraints have slowed progress with the actions outlined in the Conservation Areas Management Plan. However, work to produce a wide selection of FAQs on conservation subjects was progressed, the project to enhance St Mary's Churchyard and the resurfacing and improvement of Victoria Passage were completed.

No alterations were made to the extent of the existing conservation areas.

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 also 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 to be at risk and any changes reported over the monitoring 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 44: Heritage Assets at risk in Watford

| Asset Name/Conservation Area | Condition and Description |
|---|---|
| Little Cassiobury and former stable block, Hempstead Road (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 put the building up for sale in 2023. |
| 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 had not begun by the end of the financial year. |

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 relating to 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 45: 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:

There have been no applications granted contrary to Historic England advice over the first three years of the plan period including the 2024/2025 monitoring year.

It is positive to see that the council has not acted against the specialist advice of Historic England for any application since the Local Plan adoption.

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's specialist 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. It will also report works that have been permitted within a conservation area.

Table 46: Changes and alterations to heritage assets and conservation areas over the monitoring year

| Name of Asset | Description of change | Reasons for change |
|--|--|--------------------------------|
| Old Station House, 147A St Albans Road | Listed Building Consent for erection of single storey side extensions, interior refurbishment, removal of concrete ramp and amendments to amenity area to the north west. This is for the building to be used as a public house. | Redevelopment of a vacant site |
| 12 Heath Farm Court | Listed Building Consent for removal of internal wall. | Householder development |
| 92 Church Road | Erection of Single Storey Rear Extension | Householder development |
| 43 And 45 Park Road | Demolition and replacement of the existing conservatory, and amalgamation of no. 43 and no. 45 park road to create one dwelling, associated landscaping and boundary treatment. | Householder development |
| 109 Queens Road | Erection of a front dormer window and rear roof light | Householder development |
| 11 Church Road | Replace existing rear window with new access doors and infill the side access door to the rear. | Householder development |
| 3 Gartlet Road | Retrospective replacement of front and rear windows and front and rear doors. | Householder development |
| 104 Estcourt Road | Change of use from vacant B3 to C3 residential and erection of part single, part two storey, one bedroom dwelling with associated amenity space and refuse and cycle storage. | Change of use and extension |
| 7 Heath Farm Court | Demolition of existing conservatory, erection of single storey rear extension and front porch extension. | Householder development |
| 33 Lower Paddock Road | Erection of single storey rear extension | Householder development |
| 40 Upper Paddock Road | Erection of Rear Garden Outbuilding | Householder development |
| 113 Estcourt Road | Restoration of existing wooden sash windows including replacement of existing single glazed glass. | Householder development |
| 67 Villiers Road | Repair of cracks in the render at the rear of the property and rendering the property using Ivory Corksol. | Householder development |

| | | |
|--------------------------------------|--|--|
| The Villiers Arms, 108 Villiers Road | Retrospective application for change of use from C3 dwelling house to Use Class Sui Generis. Change of use for part of the amenity space formerly owned by and associated with 106 Villiers Road (C3 Dwelling House) to form an extension of the existing pub garden to The Villiers Arms (Public House), Use Class Sui Generis. | Business requirements |
| 34 Granville Road | Retrospective erection of conservatory | Householder development |
| 10 Nascot Place | Part retrospective application for 50mm exterior wall insulation with render finish in white to the rear and side walls | Householder development |
| 76 Queens Road | Demolition of part of existing commercial/storage building and Construction of a pair of semi-detached dwellings. | Redevelopment of part of a commercial site |
| Inkerman House, 37 Church Road | Erection of single storey rear extension | Householder development |
| 201 Pinner Road | Erection of a rear dormer roof extension | Householder development |
| Central Hall, Loates Lane | Construction of demountable fabric canopy and demountable structures | Business requirements |
| 3A Amberley Terrace | Lawful development certificate for proposed change of use from C3 to C4 (6 person HMO) including erection of single storey rear extension. | Change of use and extension |
| St Marys Church | Replacement of existing metal fence around St Mary's Pre-School external play area with higher fence of design similar to railings bounding north side of area. | Business requirements |
| 13 Nascot Place | Replacement of existing sliding patio door to the rear of the property. Unit will be replaced with high quality white UPVC sliding patio door. | Householder development |
| 17 Granville Road | (Retrospective) - Change of Use from residential dwelling (C3) into HMO application for 5 persons (C4) | Change of use |
| 26 Essex Road | Installation of EV charging point on side elevation wall behind existing side entrance gate. | Householder development |
| 83 Villiers Road | Retrospective application for Installation of External insulation to the front and rear of the property and front garden wall. | Householder development |
| 5 Cole Road | Replacement of the existing UPVC and windows | Householder development |

| | | |
|--|---|------------------------------------|
| Iceland, 125 The Parade High Street | Amalgamation of ground floor commercial units to form one unit, and associated works to external areas including the installation of plant. | Business requirements |
| 75 Loates Lane | Proposed loft conversion including rear dormers, x2 front roof lights and re-roofing | Householder development |
| 42 Capel Road | Retrospective application for rebuilding and raising of pre-existing roof and replacement of pre-existing x2 roof lights with x1 single roof light. | Householder development |
| 2B Lower Paddock Road | Erection of a single storey side outbuilding. | Householder development |
| 6 Church Road | Proposed replacement of existing single glazed white UPVC window with double glazed white aluminium French doors. | Householder development |
| 192 Queens Road | Conversion of existing building into 4 No. flats with element of commercial use retained on ground floor. | Conversion of a mixed-use building |
| 160 Queens Road | Proposed loft conversion including rear dormer and x2 front roof lights | Householder development |
| Unit 10 To 11, Faircross House 116 The Parade High Street | Change of use of vacant commercial premises from use class E to educational centre use (class F1-a), and new signage | Change of use |
| Halberton, 18 Nascot Place | Installation of air source heat pump | Householder development |
| 54 Estcourt Road | Retrospective - Conversion of loft space to form habitable room, with installation of 2 No. Velux conservation style roof lights to the rear. | Householder development |

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 Local Plan discusses issues of sustainability and climate change in multiple sections as a broad overarching theme for the Local 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.

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 (kt CO₂).

The 2019 baseline is 333 kt CO₂⁸. This is the figure against which future year's data in table 47 will be measured. The 2019 baseline reflects the year which the council declared a Climate

⁸ Baseline source: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/uk-local-authority-and-regional-greenhouse-gas-emissions-national-statistics-2005-to-2020>

Emergency and committed to taking more action to reduce carbon dioxide emissions in the borough.

Table 47: The level of carbon dioxide reduction since 2019 baseline⁹

| | 2021/2022 | 2022/2023 | 2023/2024 | 2024/2025 | 2025/2026 |
|--|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| Percentage of carbon dioxide reduction since 2019 baseline (kt CO ₂) | -11.7% | -7.5% | -12.7% | -20.2% | |

What Happened?:

Over the monitoring year, there is a reported decrease in carbon dioxide emissions of 20.2% when compared to the 2019 baseline. When compared to last year, there was a reduction of 25 kilotonnes of carbon dioxide reported this year, from 291.5kt CO₂e to 266.5kt CO₂. The largest reduction was commercial carbon dioxide emissions, this includes electricity, gas and other fuels used in commercial operations.

Comparisons:

There has been a reported reduction in carbon emissions since the 2019 baseline of 333kt CO₂ 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.

The dataset used in this indicator is produced annually by the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero (DESNZ) and reports on levels two years prior to publication. Therefore, there will always be a lag of two years with this indicator.

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. It is important to note that this indicator only reports on carbon dioxide emissions, not all greenhouse gas emissions that also have a global warming potential.

Detailed results on the total greenhouse gas emissions within the borough are available in the council's Environmental Strategy Annual Report 2024/25¹⁰.

⁹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/uk-local-authority-and-regional-greenhouse-gas-emissions-statistics-2005-to-2023>

¹⁰ <https://www.watford.gov.uk/sustainable-watford/leading-example/leading-example-1/3>

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 48: 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 major applications completed | | 6 |

What Happened?:

There were two major non-residential planning applications completed this year that received BREEAM Excellent:

- 22/01486/FULM – 3 Rhodes Way (New self-storage facility, Use Class B8)
- 22/00727/VARM – 37-39 Clarendon Road (Redevelopment of site to provide dwellings and 15,294 sqm net office floorspace)
- 21/00971/FULM – Land at Clive Way (Construction of three buildings to provide industrial units (flexible uses Class E(g), B2 and/or B8)).

Comparisons:

It is not possible to make direct comparisons with the data last year as it was applications granted as opposed to completed. This is due to the delay between applications being granted under the current Local Plan and being built out and completed.

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 major non-residential developments completed this monitoring year achieved BREEAM excellent standard, this is accordance with policy CC8.2.

This indicator is important to monitor as the scale of development in Watford presents significant opportunities to improve the quality and sustainability of new non-residential buildings and they have great potential to contribute towards a wider goal of achieving sustainable development.

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 49: 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> | 4 major applications granted | 17 minor and major applications granted | | 21 |

What Happened?:

Over the monitoring year, 17 out of 18 minor and major residential planning applications were granted that meet carbon emission reduction standards.

Comparisons:

It is not possible to make direct comparisons with the data last year as it was applications granted as opposed to completed. This is due to the delay between applications being granted under the current Local Plan and being built out and completed. Direct comparisons will be able to be made in future reports.

Implications for the Local Plan:

It is positive to see that a large proportion of residential applications granted meet the carbon reduction standards. This indicator is important to monitor the level of compliance with this target. as the scale of development in Watford presents significant opportunities to improve the quality and sustainability of new residential buildings and they have great potential to contribute towards a wider goal of achieving sustainable development.

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 50: The number of new homes achieving water use standards on major developments

| | 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 | 463 | | 833 |

What Happened?:

Over this monitoring year, 633 dwellings were completed on major development sites. 463 of those (73%) complied with the water use standards set out in policy CC8.3 of the Local Plan.

Comparisons:

This is the second monitoring year that this indicator has been reported on, it is positive to see an increase in dwellings completed that meet the water use standard. It should be noted that the dwellings that did not meet the 110 litres per person standard were granted in 2018, thus not under the current Local Plan.

Implications for the Local Plan:

Affinity Water are the main provider of water in Watford and their customers on average use 156 litres per person per day compared with the national average of 145 litres per person per day (Affinity Water¹¹). 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 73% of all new homes delivered on major residential development sites met this standard over the monitoring year. This indicator will be monitored going forward to determine the level of compliance with this target.

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 51: The number of AQMAs in place within the borough

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

¹¹ <https://www.affinitywater.co.uk/saveourstreams/tips>

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 52: 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 | 12 minor and major applications | | 13 |

What Happened?:

Over the monitoring year, 12 applications for minor and major developments had policy CC8.5 listed as a reason for refusal. Seven of the applications were for residential developments, whilst five were for Class E use or sui generis.

Comparisons:

This is the second year that this indicator is being reported, however, this year also includes minor applications in the total figure. Therefore, direct comparisons cannot be made this year.

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. It is positive to see that this policy is being utilised to prevent development that would harm the amenity of adjacent land uses.

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 despite 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 53 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 53: 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 | | 0 |

[Environment Agency objections to planning applications based on flood risk and water quality - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/684442/Environment_Agency_objections_to_planning_applications_based_on_flood_risk_and_water_quality_-_GOV.UK.pdf)

What Happened?:

Over the monitoring year, no applications in Watford were objected to by the Environment Agency based on flood risk.

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 54: 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 | See <i>summary in the box below</i> | See <i>summary in the box below</i> | See <i>summary in the box below</i> | See <i>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 and the Biodiversity Duty Report. However, these 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 communal landscaped amenity areas on-site and one had a communal landscaped roof terrace.

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 four major applications completed, three of which had some form of open/amenity space. This year had many more 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.

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 Environment Act (2021) introduced measures to enhance biodiversity, with Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) becoming a legal requirement as of 12 February 2024 for major developments, and from 2 April 2024 for small sites. Under these provisions, developments are required to deliver a minimum 10% net gain in biodiversity relative to the established baseline. The achievement of this gain must adhere to the mitigation hierarchy, prioritising the retention of on-site habitats, followed by on-site habitat creation and enhancement, utilisation of off-site units, and, as a final measure, the purchase of statutory credits.

Overall, BNG aims to ensure a development will result in more or better-quality natural habitat than there was before development. Some developments are exempt from BNG requirements.

Table 55: 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 | | 1 |

What Happened?:

One development that was granted since Local Plan adoption and completed within the current MY delivered a biodiversity net gain of 212%. 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:

Further details on the actions the council have carried out to meet BNG obligations and comply with the biodiversity duty are published in the Biodiversity Duty Report.

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.

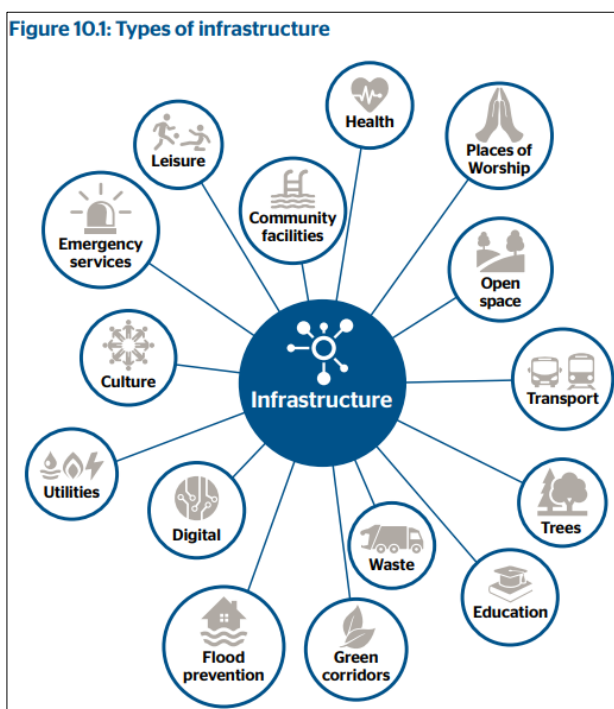


Figure 7: Types of Infrastructure

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 IDP¹². 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 56 reports on the delivery of projects referenced in the IDP over the monitoring year.

¹² [Microsoft Word - 2021 WBC Infrastructure Delivery Plan \(usrfiles.com\)](#)

Table 56: Progress on infrastructure projects over the monitoring year

| IDP section | Name of project | Progress 2024/25 |
|-------------|---|---|
| 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. HCC, as Highways Authority, are undertaking further feasibility work. |
| 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. HCC are progressing design work and seeking ATF funding for this project. |
| 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' is complete. This is located outside of Watford borough boundary in Hemel Hempstead but provides additional capacity for the whole of SW Herts. |

What Happened?:

A range of projects were progressed over the monitoring year. They were mostly feasibility and scoping work on transport improvement projects.

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 is 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 57 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 December 2025 and covers the same period as this AMR¹³.

¹³ Infrastructure Funding Statement 2024-2025: <https://www.watford.gov.uk/planning-information-1/community-infrastructure-levy-watford/3>

Table 57: 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 ¹⁴ | £2,786,962 | £2,592,831 | £789,362 | | £7,435,980 |
| S106 | £154,542 | £1,971,918 | £475,166 | £4,808,949 | | £7,410,575 |
| Total (£) | £1,421,367 | £4,758,880 | £3,067,997 | £5,598,311 | | £14,846,555 |

What Happened?:

Over the monitoring year £789,362.42 was collected through CIL payments towards infrastructure projects.

In addition to the above CIL receipts, the council received £4,808,949.21 in s106 contributions over the monitoring year. This was largely contributions towards affordable housing, with smaller contributions towards open spaces, healthcare and the controlled parking zone.

The council spent a total of £65,041.22 of s106 contributions over the monitoring year.

Further detail on CIL and S106 collection and spend is reported in the annual Infrastructure Funding Statement.

Comparisons:

Overall, the amount of CIL and s106 contribution has increased this year compared to last. The following table provides a comparison between the CIL contributions received this year compared to previous years.

| Year | Amount CIL collected |
|---------|----------------------|
| 2015/16 | £160,275.84 |
| 2016/17 | £421,060.02 |
| 2017/18 | £762,986.63 |
| 2018/19 | £1,442,328.15 |
| 2019/20 | £3,270,390.10 |
| 2020/21 | £3,029,271.00 |
| 2021/22 | £1,266,825.22 |
| 2022/23 | £2,786,962.10 |
| 2023/24 | £2,592,831.68 |
| 2024/25 | £789,362.42 |

¹⁴ 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.

Until this year, there had been a general upward trend in the amount of CIL contribution received since 2018. The amount of CIL collected this year is lower than the last two years.

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.

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.

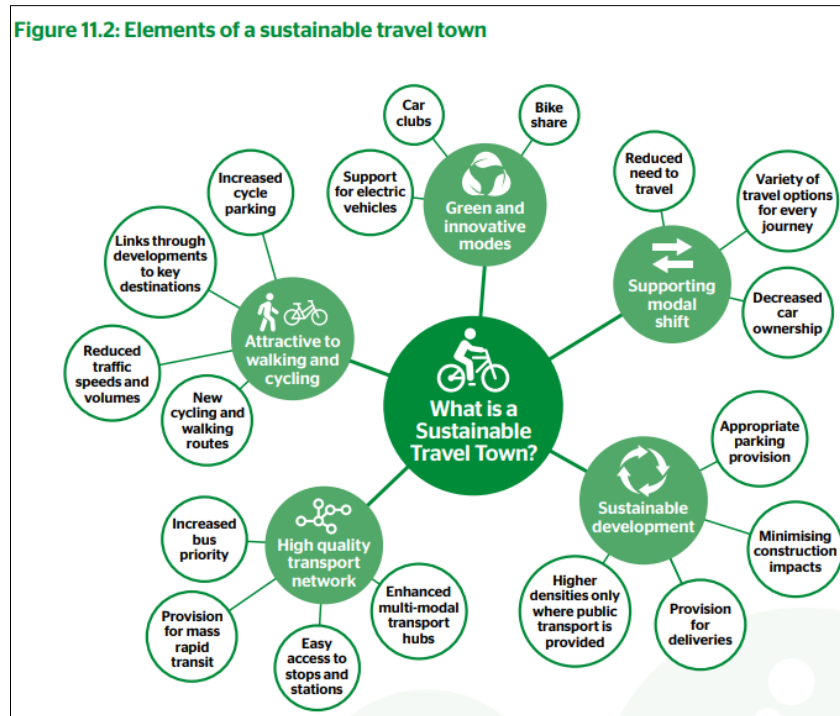


Figure 8: Elements of a Sustainable Travel Town

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 58: % 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% | 99% | | 97% |
| % of new development within 400m of a railway station | 29% | 12% | 4% | 22% | | 17% |

What Happened?:

682 of the 691 net residential units completed over the monitoring year were within 400m (as the crow flies) of a bus stop. This equates to 46 out of 47 applications, or 99% of applications. There was one application for 9 dwellings that was more than 400m away from the nearest bus stop.

22% of net residential completions (150 out of 691 dwellings) over the monitoring year were within 400m (as the crow flies) of one of the six railway stations located within the borough¹⁵.

Comparisons:

The method used to calculate these figures is the same as previous monitoring years but a different method to 2022/23. Therefore, comparison can be made between 2021/22, 2023/24 and this monitoring year.

There was an increase in the number of dwellings within 400m of a rail station and/or bus stop. This is largely due to the completion of 141 units at The Exchange, St Albans Road, ref. 21/01575/VARM.

¹⁵ 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.

Safeguarded Transport Routes

Policy ST11.2 of the Local Plan safeguards several transport routes (listed in Table 59) 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 59: Annual updates on safeguarded transport routes

| Safeguarded routes | 2024/2025 - Any updates |
|--|--|
| Disused Croxley Rail Line | None |
| Ebury Way cycle path | A part of new Watford Green Loop proposals (see below) |
| Abbey Line | Painted fences and artwork added to the walkway to the Abbey Line at Watford Junction. |
| Existing and Planned cycle routes in the Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan | The Watford Green Loop was formally launched this monitoring year. |
| Any future planned mass rapid transport routes identified by the county council | None |
| Watford Junction | None |

What Happened?:

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 formally launched this monitoring year.

The Abbey Line walkway at Watford Junction was updated with painted fences and artwork.

Implications for the Local Plan:

Policy ST11.2 of the Local Plan safeguards several 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 60 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 60: Number of applications approved with policy compliant cycle parking provisions

| | 2021/2022 | 2022/2023 | 2023/2024 | 2024/2025 | 2025/2026 |
|--|--|--|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| 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 | 22 | |
| % 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% | 79% | |

What Happened?:

22 applications were required to provide policy compliant cycle parking. It is positive to see that a majority of applications granted have policy compliant cycle parking.

Comparisons:

The number of applications with policy compliant cycle parking has decreased since last year. Applications that were non-compliant were small scale or within the Town Centre.

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 61 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 61: 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 | No additional update | | 32% |
| % of people cycling for transport | 3.7% | No additional update | 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 62: 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 | 6,522 | |
| % of all car registrations in the borough that are Ultra-low emission. | 4% | 5% | 10% | 14% | |

[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 6,522 electric or ultra-low emission vehicles registered over the monitoring year.

In total there were 46,150 vehicles registered in Watford at the end of the 2023/2024 monitoring year and this remains the most recent published figure. Against this figure, electric vehicle registrations have equated to 14% of all vehicle registrations over the monitoring year.

Comparisons:

The figure of 6,522 demonstrates a clear and rising demand for electric vehicles when compared to the 2023-2024 monitoring year, where there were 4,619 electric or ultra-low emission vehicle registrations in the borough.

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 (6,522) would represent 14% of the total vehicle registration figure. This is a reasonably significant increase since the first few 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 63: 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 | 16 | | 2,559 |
| Number of electric vehicle charging spaces provided by the council | 34 | 79 | 72 | 24 | | 202 |

What Happened?:

There was a total of 16 electric vehicle spaces granted on new development sites over the monitoring year.

In addition to spaces delivered as a result of new development, the council have delivered a further 24 electric charging points across the borough. There are a further 53 charge points planned to be installed over the next monitoring year.

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:

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 published¹⁶. 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.

¹⁶ [Car or van availability - Office for National Statistics \(ons.gov.uk\)](https://ons.gov.uk)

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.

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 64: % 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 | 2 major applications | | 9 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 | | 100% of all major applications |

What Happened?:

Data is only available for major applications granted over the monitoring year. There was one commercial and one residential major application granted this monitoring year, both of which included a submission of a Travel Plan, either as a stand-alone document or within a design and access statement.

Comparisons:

It is positive to see that the proportion of major applications with a Travel Plan has remained at 100%, although there were fewer number major applications granted compared to last monitoring year.

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

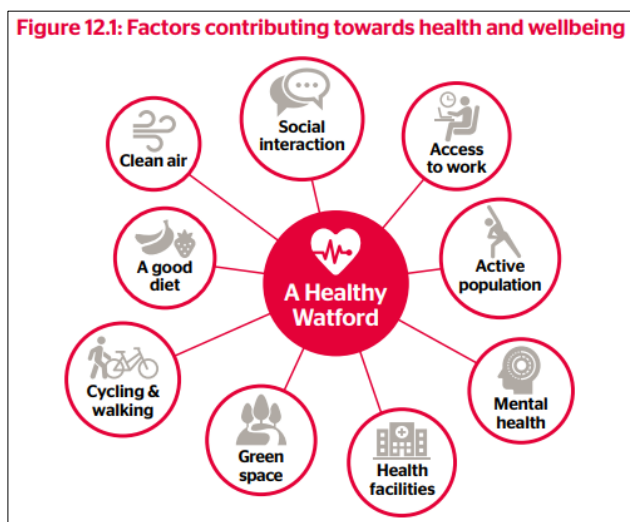


Figure 9: Factors contributing towards health and wellbeing

Table 65: 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 | No data available this year. Data will be reported in subsequent AMRs | No data available this year. Data will be reported in subsequent AMRs | 4 | 3 | | 7 |
| Major transport infrastructure improvements | No data available this year. Data will be reported in subsequent AMRs | No data available this year. Data will be reported in subsequent AMRs | 0 | 0 | | 0 |
| Any other locally or nationally significant infrastructure | No data available this year. Data will be reported in subsequent AMRs | No data available this year. Data will be reported in subsequent AMRs | 0 | 0 | | 0 |
| Total | | | 4 | 3 | | 7 |

What Happened?:

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

Comparisons:

This is the second year that data is available, therefore detailed comparisons is limited. Nonetheless, it is positive to see that the large-scale developments being proposed are providing a HIA at application stage. This ensures that any health impacts as a result of the redevelopment of a site are assessed appropriately.

Implications for the Local Plan:

The requirement for HIAs to be submitted for the types of applications listed in table 65 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. For this reason, this year reports on the proportion of planning applications for large developments that provide a HIA as a part of their planning application.

Of the three 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 66 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 66: New community facilities delivered over the monitoring year

| Type of Facility | Location/Name of facility |
|------------------|--|
| Community | New covered outdoor teaching area at the Cadet Centre (22/01033/FUL) |
| Community | New community hub (York Way, 20/00178/FULM) |

What Happened?:

There were two community facilities completed over the monitoring year, including the expansions of the exiting Cadets facilities and a new community hub.

Comparisons:

Similarly to the facilities provided this year, these are 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 67: Number of community facilities lost over the monitoring year

| Type of Facility | Location/Name of facility | Reasons for loss |
|------------------|---------------------------|------------------|
| None | N/A | N/A |

What Happened?:

There was no loss in community facilities over the monitoring year.

Comparisons:

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

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

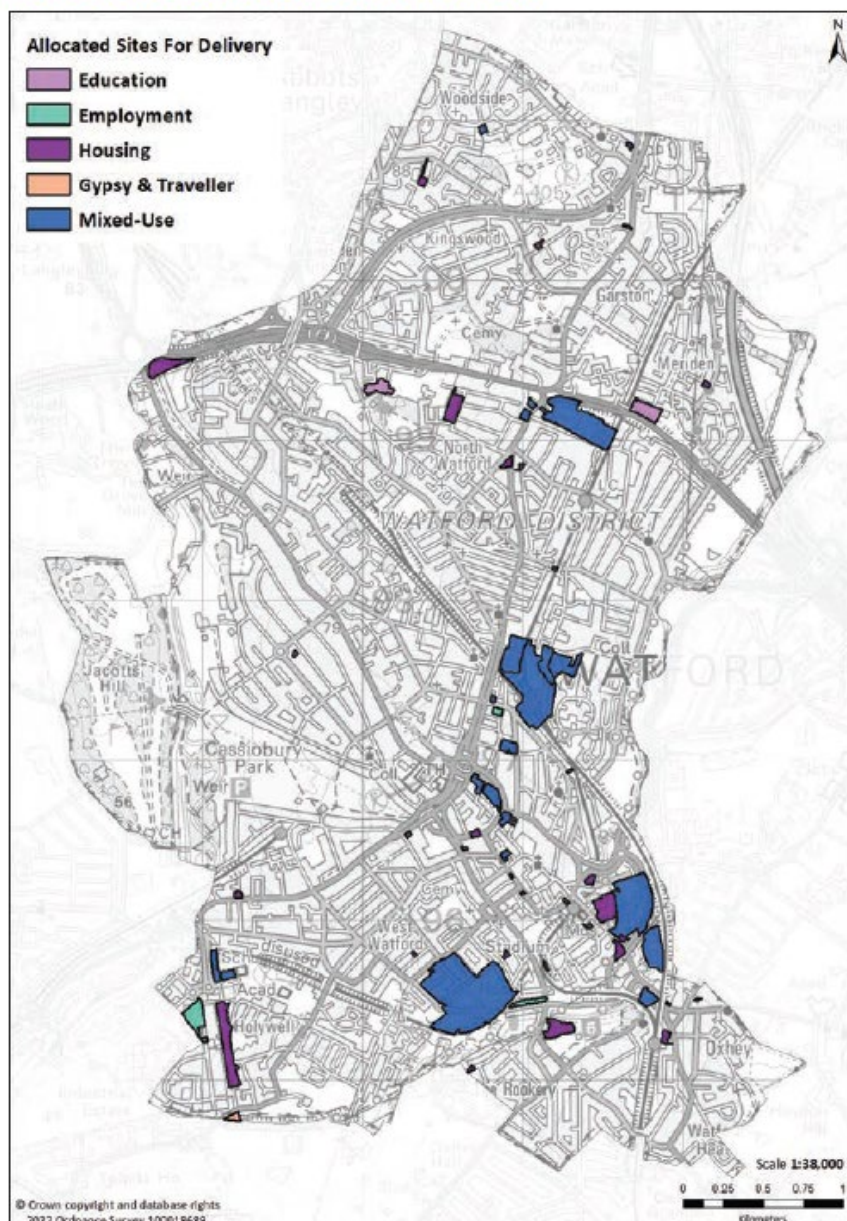


Figure 10: Allocated sites in the Local Plan

Residential Site Allocations

There is a total of 32 purely residential site allocations in the Plan. Table 68 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 68: Progress on residential site allocations over the monitoring year (MY)

| Reference/Name | Yield | Progress/Updates over MY |
|--|-------|---|
| HS01- Lych Gate | 5 | 4 dwellings completed over the monitoring year (21/00304/FUL) |
| HS02- 275 Sheepcot Lane | 21 | No update |
| HS03- 1 Lavinia Avenue | 5 | No update |
| HS04- 5 Sheepcot Drive | 9 | No update |
| HS05- Land at Badger PH | 9 | No update |
| HS06- Land at Russell Lane | 93 | Permission granted for 54 dwellings by committee on 03.12.2024 subject to S106 agreement (23/00949/FULM) |
| HS07- Former Mothercare site | 98 | 9 dwellings completed over the monitoring year (22/00565/FUL) 145 dwellings completed in previous monitoring year (20/00803/OPD and 21/00455/AAPA) |
| 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 | 6 dwellings under construction (24/00795/FUL) |
| 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- Wiggshall Depot | 330 | No update |
| HS29- 41 Aldenham Road | 5 | Construction started for 9 residential units 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 2021 (20/00413/FUL), 555sqm floorspace, 5 residential units |

What Happened?:

Two allocated sites for housing (HS01 and HS07) reported net completions over this monitoring year. A further 15 dwellings on the HS10 and HS29 sites are currently under construction.

Comparisons:

As this is still relatively 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 sites completed or under construction compared to 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 69 provides any planning or delivery updates that have been reported over the monitoring year.

Table 69: 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>141 units have been completed in this monitoring year and 562 are under construction (21/01575/VARM).</p> <p>Development underway for 4,604sqm non-residential floorspace (A1, B1, D1, sui generis) and 1,214 residential units (19/00507/FULM). 314 units currently under construction.</p> <p>Subject to a Non-Material Amendment (21/00094/NONMAT) on 249 of these units. This application was reported as started at the end of the 2022/2023 monitoring year but no completions yet recorded.</p> |

| | | |
|--|------|---|
| | | Conditional planning permission granted to increase building height to provide 75 additional dwellings (23/01052/VARM). |
| 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 | Permission granted for 314 dwellings by committee on 04.03.2025 subject to S106 agreement (24/00615/FULM) |
| MU10- Land at the Rear of 125-127 The Parade | 90 | No update |
| MU11- 23-37 The Parade | 72 | Permission granted for 141 dwellings by committee on 10.07.2024 subject to S106 agreement (23/00391/FULM) |
| MU12- 19-21 Clarendon Road | 14 | Permission granted (21/01811/FULM) for 65 dwellings in 2022 |
| MU13- Land at Sainsbury's Town Centre | 220 | No update |
| MU14- Land at the Car Park, Wellstones | 40 | Appeal allowed for 89 dwellings (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 | 49 completions this MY and 109 units under construction (21/01316/NONMAT) 142 units completed in 2023/2024 MY (19/01342/VARM) 253 units completed in 2022/2023 MY (19/01342/VARM) 288 units complete in 2021/2022 MY (17/01511/FULM) and (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 | Completed 7,781sqm industrial and employment floorspace (21/00971/FULM) |

What Happened?:

Several mixed-use sites currently have granted permissions or are pending consideration. There was a total of 141 completed dwellings and 876 under construction, both as part of MU05.

Several other planning updates are reported, including the appeal decision at MU14.

Comparisons:

It is positive to see progress on some of these allocations. 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 70: Progress on employment allocations over the monitoring year (MY)

| Reference/Name | Uses | Progress/Updates over MY |
|---|------------|--|
| EM01- Cassiobury House, 11-19 Station Road | Office | Completed this monitoring year for 248sqm office floorspace (22/01106/FUL) |
| EM02- South of Wiggshall Industrial Estate | Industrial | Construction started for 1623sqm of B8 floorspace (23/00626/FULM) |
| EM03- Gateway Zone | Industrial | <i>Completed in last monitoring year (21/01605/VARM)</i> |
| EM04- Land between 14-18 Greenhill Crescent | Industrial | No update |

What Happened?:

Over the last monitoring year, there was 248sqm of employment floorspace completed at EM01, 1,623sqm under construction at EM02.

It is positive to see there are site allocations already delivering or under construction.

Comparisons:

In the previous monitoring year 2023-24, there was 6,719sqm of employment floorspace completed at EM03. By comparison, this year there has been a marked decrease because of smaller schemes.

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

Table 71: 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 were no delivery or permissions granted on education allocations over the monitoring year.

Comparisons:

There has been no delivery the first three 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 relatively 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.