

Local Development Scheme

A work programme for Watford's Local Plan
2016-2019

1st April 2016

This document can be made available in alternative formats including large print. The council also has staff who can verbally translate the document into a range of other languages.

Please contact us on telephone: 01923 226400 for more information.

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1. What is the Local Development Scheme?

- 1.1. The Local Development Scheme (LDS) is a public statement of Watford Borough Council's three year programme for the preparation of the Local Plan. The programme is agreed by council resolution and comes into effect on 1st April 2016.
- 1.2. The LDS contains:
 - A brief description of the Local Plan documents the council will prepare in the next 3 years.
 - A preparation timetable.
 - Information on how the council will monitor progress against the timetable.

2. Why is a new LDS needed?

- 2.1. The council's last LDS was published in April 2013 and covers the 3 year period to March 2016. During the last period Local Plan Part 1 Core Strategy and the CIL charging schedule were adopted (2013 and 2015 respectively).
- 2.2. This LDS covers the period from 2016 to 2019. During this period we intend to complete the Watford Local Plan with the adoption of Local Plan part 2 and to commence a plan review to take account of more recent evidence.
- 2.3. Although we expect that the Local Plan documents will be prepared by and for Watford Borough Council, and that their coverage will be borough-wide, their preparation will be based on effective cooperation with neighbouring authorities, public, voluntary and private sector organisations. In particular, in line with good planning practice, and the Duty to Cooperate specifically set out in the National Planning Policy Framework, we will work with other organisations to identify and address issues which cross administrative boundaries and relate to strategic priorities.
- 2.4. For more information about the Watford Local Plan you can look at the council website www.watford.gov.uk or contact us as below.

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3. What is the Local Plan?

3.1. The Local Plan sets out planning policy. It sets out the strategic priorities and development considerations for the area and is used in determining planning applications.

3.2. The development plan for Watford consists of:

- The remaining saved policies of the Watford District Plan 2000, until replaced (which will happen on the adoption of Local Plan Part 2)
- Local Plan documents prepared by the council and subject to independent examination (currently the Local Plan Core Strategy, adopted in 2013); and
- The Minerals and Waste Local Plan, prepared by Hertfordshire County Council.

The National Planning Policy Framework, originally published by the Government in 2012, and accompanying National Planning Policy Guidance (NPPG) are also of material consideration but do not form part of the statutory development plan.

3.3. Local Plan documents forming part of the development plan are subject to Sustainability Appraisal and to a formal examination in public (EIP). For Watford, these will comprise:

- **Local Plan Part 1 - Core Strategy** (adopted Jan 2013)
- **Local Plan Part 2 – Development Management and Site Allocation Policies**

Any policies making a change to a land use allocation will be illustrated on the **Adopted Policies Map**.

We will also be working on reviewing the Local Plan Strategy to cover the period to 2036.

3.4. The Local Plan also contains other supporting documents, available on the council's website:

- **Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs)**
- **Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) (2010)**
- **Authority's Monitoring Report** (produced annually)
- **Local Development Scheme** (this document)
- **The CIL Charging Schedule (2015)**

3.5. New supplementary planning documents proposed include:

- **Skyline – Watford's Approach to taller buildings**
- **S106 Planning Obligations**

3.6. Development briefs are also to be prepared, including for the Watford Junction Special Policy Area.

4. Monitoring and Review

- 4.1. Each year the council publishes a monitoring report (AMR), covering the year from the start of April of the preceding year to the end of March. The AMR compares the progress of Local Plan preparation to the timetable in the LDS. It also assesses the effectiveness of Local Plan policies, and the significant effects, and reports monitoring data for the borough.
- 4.2. The AMR will therefore act to flag up both policy changes which may be required, and whether a review of the preparation timetable is necessary.
- 4.3. Due to the increase in population and demand for new homes and employment space, a review of the Local Plan Strategy is proposed taking account of emerging technical work on housing and employment growth.

5. Local Plan documents scope and timetable.

5.1. The tables below describe the scope and content of the Local Plan and a timetable for the main stages in production. The adopted proposals map will be revised when any document is adopted which makes changes to the map in order to illustrate geographically the application of the policies.

5.2. The main formal stages in plan preparation are as follows:

- **Notification (Reg 18)**

This stage involves notifying those bodies or persons specified in the Regulations (The Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012 that we intend to prepare a Local Plan document; the subject of that document, and inviting representations on what such a document should contain.

In practice there will be consultation stages between this and publication to allow for the development and sustainability appraisal of reasonable alternatives, and for public participation in plan preparation. Indicative times for these are given in the table below for information – the number of stages of informal consultation required will depend on the outcome of earlier consultation and sustainability appraisal.

- **Publication (Reg 19)**

The Local Plan Document, as intended for submission to the Secretary of State, will be published for formal consultation.

- **Submission (Reg 22)**

The Local Plan Document is submitted for independent examination by a planning inspector, along with all comments received at the publication stage.

- **Examination (Reg 24)**

An independent inspector is appointed by the planning inspectorate to assess the soundness of the submitted plan. The inspector will take all comments received into account.

- **Adoption (Reg 26)**

The stage at which the council formally adopts the Local Plan document as part of the development plan.

The Watford Local Plan 2006-2031 – Part 2

Title	Local Plan Part 2
Subject Matter	Site allocations and development management policies, to deliver the adopted Local Plan Part 1 Core Strategy.
Status	Local Plan Document:
Geographic coverage	Watford Borough
Timetable	
Notification	November 2012
<i>Informal consultation</i>	Autumn 2013 – March 2016
Publication (for consultation)	August 2016
Submission	February 2017
Examination	March – November 2017
Adoption	January 2018

The Watford Local Plan Strategy 2016-2036

Whilst completing work on Local Plan Part 2, we are already looking ahead to reviewing the Local Plan to cover the period to 2036. This plan will take account of the most up to date information on development needs in the area.

Title	Local Plan Strategy 2016-2036
Subject Matter	The Local Plan Strategy document will set out the overall strategy and broad locations for development in Watford to 2036.
Status	Local Plan Document:
Geographic coverage	Watford Borough
Timetable	
Notification	March/April 2016
<i>Informal consultation</i>	December 2017 and July 2018
Publication (for consultation)	December 2018
Submission	July 2019
Examination	Aug 2019-Dec 2019
Adoption	February 2020

6. Resources and Risk Management

Resources

- 6.1. The Local Plan is prepared by the council's Planning Policy Group. Allowing for other work responsibilities, and planned absences such as leave and training, the Group is currently able to dedicate around 14 person days per week to Local Plan preparation.
- 6.2. The need for an external consultant to fulfil our Sustainability Appraisal and Strategic Environmental Assessment requirements is ongoing. External consultants are also used to prepare background evidence base studies, and they are appointed on an as needed basis.
- 6.3. The policy team has an annual budget for the production of supporting studies for local plan preparation, which is £98K per annum from 2016-2017.

Risks

- 6.4. A separate risk assessment has been undertaken of risks which may affect our ability to prepare documents in line with the planned timetable. A key risk relates to staffing levels, given the likely continuation of cuts in local government funding and pressure on resources. This may affect both staffing levels within the team, and the contribution other relevant staff within the council are able to make to our work. Increased use of outside consultants or temporary staff may be required to keep plan preparation on time. Alternatively, if the budget does not allow this, the timetable may have to slip, and if so, will need to be revised.
- 6.5. Another significant risk to the timetable is the process of working closely with neighbouring authorities and other agencies through the Duty to Co operate, particularly in relation to the need to agree the distribution of housing, employment and other uses across a wider area. This means that both evidence and discussions on how that evidence should be translated into local policies and targets will need to be coordinated at both officer and political level which is likely to have timing implications. Any failure to fulfil this duty properly would mean the plan being found unsound.
- 6.6. Further changes to the national planning system pose a high risk that may introduce additional delay and uncertainty.
- 6.7. Another potential risk is the emergence of neighbourhood planning. Currently there are no neighbourhood plans being produced in Watford. However should a group wish to prepare such a plan, resources will need to be diverted from the Planning Policy team to assist in the production of a neighbourhood plan.