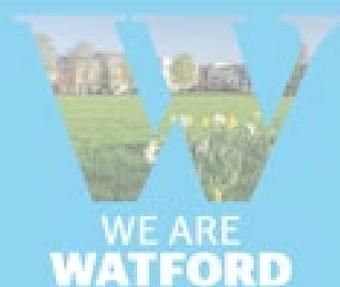


Local Development Scheme
Timetable for the New Watford Local Plan
October 2020

watfordlocalplan.co.uk



Watford Local Plan Coverage



Summary Timetable

| | |
|---|---------------------------|
| Notification | December 2016 |
| Issues and Options consultation | September – October 2018 |
| First Draft Local Plan consultation (Preferred Options) | September – October 2019 |
| Publication | January 2021 |
| Submission | June 2021 |
| Examination | July 2021 – December 2021 |
| Adoption | February 2022 |

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What is the Local Development Scheme?

Local authorities are required to prepare and maintain a Local Development Scheme (LDS). The LDS sets out the three year timetable for the new Local Plan. This document updates the timetable set out in the previous LDS which was adopted in 2016 and will be reviewed on a regular basis.

The LDS includes a summary of the content and geographical area covered by each document, the timetable for their preparation and subsequent review. The requirement for an LDS is set out in the [Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act](#) (2004), as amended by the [Localism Act](#) (2011). It states that the scheme must specify the local development documents which are to be development plan documents and include:

- the subject matter and geographical area to which each development plan document is to relate
- which development plan documents (if any) are to be prepared jointly, with one or more other local planning authorities
- any matter or area in respect of which the authority have agreed (or propose to agree) to the constitution of a joint committee under section 29
- the timetable for the preparation and revision of development plan documents and
- such other matters as are prescribed.

Progress on the Local Plan will be monitored through the local authority's monitoring report and inform future versions of the document. These updates will be made available on the council's website.

Current Development Plan

The preparation of a local plan is guided by the National Planning Policy Framework (Revised 2018). This national guidance includes a presumption in favour of sustainable development when preparing plans and making planning decisions.

The development plan includes all of the adopted planning documents that set out policies and proposals for the development and how land is to be used in the borough. This includes those prepared by Watford Borough Council, Hertfordshire County Council and neighbourhood plans prepared by neighbourhood groups.

The development plan guides planning decisions and ensures these are rational and consistent, having regard to material considerations. Development plans require updating to ensure decisions are made based on up to date planning policies and that future needs are appropriately planned for.

Watford Local Plan Documents

The Watford Local Plan consists of several development plan documents (Figure 1).

Figure 1. Watford Local Plan Documents



The revised National Planning Policy Framework (2018), and accompanying National Planning Policy Guidance (NPPG) are material considerations but do not form part of the Development plan.

Local Plan - Part 2 Site Allocations and Development Management Policies 2006-31 was intended to include more detailed policies and allocations to deliver the vision set out in the Core Strategy. However, the council resolved not to progress the Local Plan Part 2 but to instead switch to the preparation of a new Local Plan. A new Local Development Scheme and timetable have therefore been prepared to reflect this change.

Other Development Plans Covering Watford Borough

In addition to documents that Watford has prepared and adopted, there are other Development plan documents prepared by Hertfordshire County Council that form part of the Watford Development Plan (Figure 2).

Figure 2. Hertfordshire County Council documents forming part of the Watford Local Plan



Strategic Planning and the Duty to Cooperate

The ‘duty to cooperate’ was brought in through the Localism Act (2011). To make plans more effective, it requires local planning authorities and other relevant bodies and organisations to work collaboratively and constructively to discuss cross-boundary issues when development plan documents are being prepared.

Joint Working

The Local Development Scheme sets out a commitment and timetable for the preparation of the Local Plan. In addition to Watford, neighbouring authorities are also preparing their respective local plans.

Watford shares a variety of cross boundary issues with neighbouring areas. Collaborative working to discuss shared issues and constructively consider how these can be addressed through coordinated development has improved, and continues to do so, over time. Watford has also been working collaboratively with other partners to support development including the Local Enterprise Partnership.

Figure 3. Area covered by the South West Hertfordshire Joint Strategic Plan



South West Hertfordshire Joint Strategic Plan

The local authorities of Dacorum, Hertsmere, Three River, St Albans and Watford, with the additional involvement with Hertfordshire County Council, have come together and agreed to work on the South West Hertfordshire Joint Spatial Plan (JSP). This plan will identify key strategic issues in the area and set out a growth strategy for the South West Hertfordshire area.

Preparation of the Joint Strategic Plan will take place alongside the local plans being undertaken by each respective council and will provide a platform to consider the growth challenges in the wider South West Hertfordshire area can be addressed in the long term.

Future Development Plan

Local Plan Review

Since the Watford Core Strategy was adopted in 2013. There have been many changes in the planning system.

The National Planning Policy Framework was revised in 2018 and requires local authorities to have an 'up to date' local plan. This is when the local plan is less than five years old and makes provision for the housing required during this time span. Local plans are also expected to identify land for development to cover a period of 10 years.

In 2018, the Government amended national guidance on how to calculate housing need. This is a standard methodology that is to be used by all local authorities to set out the number of homes required over the next ten years and over the period covered by the local plan.

The Core Strategy set out a housing target of 260 dwellings per year to 2031. This was based on the East of England Plan requirements. In 2016, the South West Hertfordshire Strategic Housing Market Assessment identified a need for 577 dwellings per year.

The review will result in a new local plan which will include strategic planning policies, development management policies and site allocations. These will be set out in a single document and will be represented on the Policies Map.

Neighbourhood Plans

Neighbourhood Plans were introduced through the Localism Act (2012) and subsequent regulations such as [The Neighbourhood Planning \(General\) Regulations 2012](#) and the [Neighbourhood Planning Act 2017](#). The area and issues covered by a neighbourhood plan are identified and set out by the neighbourhood planning group. Neighbourhood plans once adopted become part of the development plan. They are a material consideration when making planning decisions. As of February 2019, there were no neighbourhood plans in the borough.

Statement of Community Involvement

The Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) was adopted by the council in November 2019. The document sets out how the council will involve and engage with the community during the preparation, monitoring and review of development plan documents and planning applications.

Following the circumstances related to the pandemic affecting the Local Planning Authority, the Statement of Community Involvement will be revised to set out how the Local Planning Authority will engage with the community where face to face meetings and events are not possible or advised.

Other Documents to be Prepared

Authority Monitoring Report

Each year the council publishes a monitoring report (AMR). It covers 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, the significant effects, and reports that monitor data for the borough.

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.

Supplementary Planning Documents

Supplementary planning documents (SPDs) provide additional detail and guidance to support policies in the development plan. These documents are subject to public consultation and are a material consideration when making planning decisions. However, they cannot be used to set out new policies.

Community Infrastructure Levy

The Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) is a mechanism to gather financial contributions generated by new development to provide new infrastructure, both locally and strategically. The CIL Charging Schedule was adopted by Watford in 2015. It sets out the standard charge that particular types of new development are required to pay. The CIL will be kept under review to ensure it appropriately reflects development requirements and viability considerations critical to the Local Plan.

Infrastructure Funding Statements

Infrastructure Funding Statements are prepared annually and set out the funds received by the Local Authority that have been generated by new development, through CIL or section

106 agreements. The statement sets out the projects, or types of infrastructure, that have been allocated or accrued funds to deliver infrastructure.

Risk Assessment

| Risk | Likelihood | Impact | Mitigation |
|---|------------|--------|--|
| Changes in national policy and regulations which require a significant alteration to emerging plan content. | High | Medium | Highlight issues and concerns through responses to Government consultations. Access external support from agencies such as the Planning Advisory Service (PAS). |
| Preparation of Local Plan and/or the Joint Strategic Plan fails to meet key project milestones. | High | Medium | Achieving key milestones is integral for the continuity of a project and to progress work that is to follow. This can be mitigated through good project management, project coordination through shared resources and setting out clear objectives with regular dialogue between authorities. Can be supported by joint working on evidence bases. |
| Preparation of evidence base documents is delayed. | High | Medium | The evidence base is critical to underpin approaches and policies set out in the Local Plan. Delays can adversely affect progress on the Plan and compromise the overall timetable for completion. This can be mitigated by good project management of internal projects and external consultants and anticipating the potential ramifications of delays on other aspects of the Local Plan when being prepared. |
| Failure to agree critical cross boundary strategic planning issues with prescribed Duty to Co-operate bodies. | Medium | Medium | Strategic issues are important to consider so development can be brought forward effectively to benefit the local and wider area. This will require continued and regular engagement with key stakeholders and retaining an up to date evidence base. |

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| Unexpected issues and quantity of consultation responses. | Medium | High | Consultations are important to gain views and ideas about the draft Local Plan as it is prepared. To reduce the potential for unexpected issues arising it will be important to have an up to date and robust evidence base and work with stakeholders and neighbouring authorities to address issues appropriately. Temporary staff could be employed, however, this will have budgetary issues. |
| Loss of staff, experience and continuity. | Medium | High | Staff resources and their continuity are important to progress the Local Plan which can take several years to complete. Loss of staff can be mitigated through the appointment of temporary staff and commissioning of consultants although this has budgetary issues. Undertaking exit interviews can help to clarify and understand issues. The Local Development Scheme timetable will be monitored and amendments can be considered. |
| Delays to decision making process | Medium | High | Decision making can accelerate and delay the preparation of the Local Plan. The potential for delays can be reduced by keeping key stakeholders and parties informed of progress. On-going officer and Member training related to key planning issues will help with understanding of the Local Plan and clarifications through legal advice can be obtained when necessary. Good project management will be required and the arranging 'special' meetings for Cabinet and Full Council if required. |

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| Emerging neighbourhood plans | Low | Low | Neighbourhood plans do not have a predictable nature for where they could arise in Watford or what their timetable may be. These will require staff resources and it will be important to have a clear and consistent approach to supporting neighbourhood planning groups. From the outset, dialogue with neighbourhood planning groups will need to highlight the importance of being consistent with the Development Plan. |
| Pressure on financial resources | Medium | High | Preparing a Local Plan will incur financial costs. Reducing funding pots and competing priorities are increasing the pressure on financial resources available to support the production of a local plan. This can be mitigated by being proactive to identifying costs early in the project, ensure a coordinated approach between council officers, teams and elected Members to make effective use of resources available and deliver mutually inclusive corporate objectives. Commissioning evidence bases jointly with neighbouring authorities can improve efficiency and reduce cost. Access grant funding and other external financial sources of finance can supplement in-house funding. |
| Capacity of Planning Inspectorate (PINs) and other statutory consultees | Medium | Medium | The latter stages of the Local Plan require the involvement of the Planning Inspectorate as part of the examination process. Delays can be mitigated with on-going dialogue with the Planning Inspectorate and key stakeholders. |

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| Local Plan found 'unsound' | Medium | High | An unsound Local Plan can result in significant delays. To minimise the potential for this taking place a Preparation of a quality evidence base that is robust and up to date. To mitigate the potential for an unsound Plan will require working collaboratively with external stakeholders, statutory consultees, and neighbouring authorities as part of the Joint Strategic Plan. Additionally, obtain legal advice when required. |
| Legal challenge | Medium | High | Obtain legal advice when required and ensure documents supporting the Local Plan are robust. |

Preparing a Development Plan Document

The stages to prepare a development plan document are set out in the Figure 3. References to 'Regulations' relate to The Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012.

Key Stages of Preparation

| | |
|---|---|
| Starting Point | Consultation on the scope of the sustainability appraisal |
| Identification of the scope and information content of the sustainability appraisal followed by a consultation with statutory consultees. | |
| Regulation 18 | Informing stakeholders about undertaking a new local plan |
| 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; the subject of that document, and inviting representations on what such a document should contain. Responses will inform the local plan document. | |
| Regulation 18 | Public participation in the preparation of the development plan document |
| Optional consultation on the early draft of the local plan to further inform content to be contained in the document. | |
| Regulations 19 and 20 | Publication of the development plan document |
| The local plan, as intended for submission to the Secretary of State, will be published for formal consultation. | |
| Regulation 22 | Submission of the development plan document to the Secretary of State |
| The local plan is submitted for independent examination by a planning inspector, along with all comments received at the publication stage, supporting evidence bases and the sustainability appraisal. | |
| Regulation 24 | Independent examination |
| 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. | |
| Regulation 25 | Inspectors examination report |
| The Planning Inspector will release a report setting out recommended changes and if the development plan document should be adopted. | |
| Regulation 26 | Adoption |
| The council formally adopts the local plan as part of the development plan. | |

Preparation Schedule

| | | |
|----------------------------|--|---------------------------|
| Title | Watford Local Plan | |
| Subject Matter | The Local Plan will set out the overall spatial strategy, strategic development priorities and objectives, site allocations, criteria based policies and a monitoring framework to guide development in Watford to 2036. | |
| Status | Development Plan Document | |
| Geographic coverage | Watford Borough | |
| Timetable | Issues and Options consultation | September - October 2018 |
| | First Local Draft Plan consultation (Preferred Options) | September - October 2019 |
| | Publication of the Local Plan (Final Draft Local Plan) | January 2021 |
| | Submission for examination | June 2021 |
| | Examination | July 2021 - December 2020 |
| | Inspectors report | January 2022 |
| | Adoption | February 2022 |

Timeline for the Review of the Local Plan

| 2018 | | | | | 2019 | | | | | | | 2020 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
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- ▲ Local Plan Issues and Options consultation
- Draft Local Plan consultation
- ◆ Publication of Local plan consultation
- +
- Submission of the Local Plan to the Secretary of State
- Examination Hearings
- +
- ★ Inspectors Report
- ★ Adoption

Evidence Base

Development plans and planning policies need to be based on a robust evidence base. During the preparation of the development plan the studies and surveys will need to be carried out. These will be undertaken by the council and through the commissioning of consultants.

Sustainability Appraisal

Development plan documents are subject to a Sustainability Appraisal, which includes fulfilling the requirements for the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) EU Directive. This Directive will continue to be adhered to by the UK Government post Brexit. The purpose of an SA is to assess the economic, environmental and social impacts of a strategy or proposal and provide additional information about the potential implications of alternative strategies as planning policies evolve. The process runs alongside the preparation of development plan documents.

Soundness

Local authorities are required to prepare a plan that it considers to be 'sound'. This requirement is tested by an independent planning inspector as part of an Examination in Public. To satisfy the tests of soundness the National Planning Policy Framework (paragraph 35) requires a local plan to be:

Positively prepared:

providing a strategy which, as a minimum, seeks to meet the area's objectively assessed needs; and is informed by agreements with other authorities, so that unmet need from neighbouring areas is accommodated where it is practical to do so and is consistent with achieving sustainable development;

Justified:

An appropriate strategy, taking into account the reasonable alternatives, and based on proportionate evidence

Effective:

Deliverable over the plan period, and based on effective joint working on cross-boundary strategic matters that have been dealt with rather than deferred, as evidenced by the statement of common ground and

Consistent with national policy:

Enabling the delivery of sustainable development in accordance with the policies in this Framework.

Resources

It is anticipated that sufficient in-house resources will be available for preparing the development plan documents.

The need for an external consultant to fulfil our Sustainability Appraisal and Strategic Environmental Assessment requirements is ongoing. When required, external consultants may be commissioned to prepare background evidence base studies to support the Local Plan.