

Watton-at-Stone

Neighbourhood Plan

2017-2033

Front cover: Thanks to Jane Abbott for her beautiful bespoke illustration

Inside: Thanks to all contributors who have provided photographs and illustrations

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Foreword

Ten years ago, the pioneering concept of “Localism” was introduced into the vocabulary of planning and local politics. What would that mean in practice? We now have the answer and it is:

The Neighbourhood Plan for Watton-at-Stone

Because Watton-at-Stone is surrounded by Green Belt and swathes of open countryside, we could have been forgiven for thinking that we would be exempt from further development. However, our quality of life, range of facilities, services and connectivity not only make Watton-at-Stone a very attractive place to live but have also resulted in us becoming a focus for future development in the East Herts District. Of course, we have to remind ourselves that the village is what it is because of development and therefore we should not shy away from sharing what we have with new households and should delight in welcoming new blood. And we never know what a new resident might aspire to. After all, the first Lord Mayor of London, Henry fitz Ailwin, was a resident (circa 1200), as was Sir Nigel Gresley, designer of the Flying Scotsman which broke the first authenticated 100 mph barrier for a steam locomotive. His Mallard locomotive set the world speed record of 126 mph in 1936, which stands to this day.

We encourage you to look closely at this document because it details what we want to achieve for our village, and it influences future developments. District Plans are overarching, whereas our Neighbourhood Plan drills down into the details which can only come from local knowledge and desires. For example, it can control minimum parking places, garden space, layout and design codes, integral green space and extended footpaths, and it can protect views and green space external to developments. Also, if there are to be any benefits accruing from developments, these can be allocated to the village and not disappear into local authority pots.

Bringing this plan to the Referendum stage was a long, complicated process against a background of shifting powers and changing policy. But resilience, perseverance and tenacity have won the day.

Our thanks and those of the whole Parish Council go to the members of the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group; their dedication has seen out a Coalition, a number of Prime Ministers.

Watton-at-Stone Parish Council

1. Introduction

The Purpose of the Neighbourhood Plan

1.1 The Watton-at-Stone Neighbourhood Plan (hereinafter referred to as the Neighbourhood Plan) will, once adopted, be part of the statutory Development Plan which is formed of the Local Plan (The East Herts District Plan), the Minerals and Waste Local Plans for Hertfordshire, and any adopted Neighbourhood Plans. The Neighbourhood Plan will guide the direction of future development in the Designated Area up to 2033.

1.2 The Localism Act 2011, with effect from April 2012, sets out the provision for communities to produce plans that have statutory weight. Taking part in this plan-making process is an opportunity for communities to have a say about the future growth in their area. The policies contained in the Neighbourhood Plan will be used in determining planning applications, will provide guidance for developers and will inspire local residents to enjoy and improve their area.

1.3 The Neighbourhood Plan is in general conformity with the statutory Development Plan and in accordance with the strategic policies of the East Herts Local Plan, prepared by East Herts District Council (EHDC). The East Herts District Plan was adopted on 23 October 2018 and will be in force until 2033. The current planning documents that make up the statutory Development Plan can be found on EHDC website and HCC website.

1.4 The Neighbourhood Plan has been prepared with regard to the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) July 2021 and current Planning Practice Guidance. According to paragraph 29 of the NPPF the Neighbourhood Plan cannot propose less development than set out in strategic policies.

1.5 The Neighbourhood Plan includes a vision for the future, objectives, planning policies and a set of actions, which aim to ensure that Watton-at-Stone will grow sustainably and thrive over time. This means that the Neighbourhood Plan provides for new housing and prevents development that would have a negative impact on the area, while seeking to protect the environment and to provide facilities that will support and enhance cater for the wellbeing of the community.

1.6 The Neighbourhood Plan will have effect for the period 2017-2033. The start date coincides with the requirements of East Herts District Plan Policy VILL1, and the end date ties in with the end of the District Plan period.

Qualifying Body and Neighbourhood Plan Area

1.7 This Neighbourhood Plan was prepared by the Watton-at-Stone Neighbourhood Plan Community Steering Group by thoroughly researching the topics of interest and issues raised by the community and consultation with residents and other stakeholders in Watton-at-Stone.

1.8 The qualifying body for the submission of the Neighbourhood Plan is Watton-at-Stone Parish Council. On 25 February 2016, Watton-at-Stone Parish Council applied to the local planning authority, East Herts District Council, for the designation of the Watton-at-Stone Parish (the Parish) as a Neighbourhood Plan Area. The Neighbourhood Plan Area is represented in [Figure 1](#) below. East Herts District Council approved the area designation on 5 April 2016. An aerial view is also provided in [Figure 2](#) to show the unique position of the village between the railway line and the A602.

Watton-at-Stone Neighbourhood Plan 2017-2033

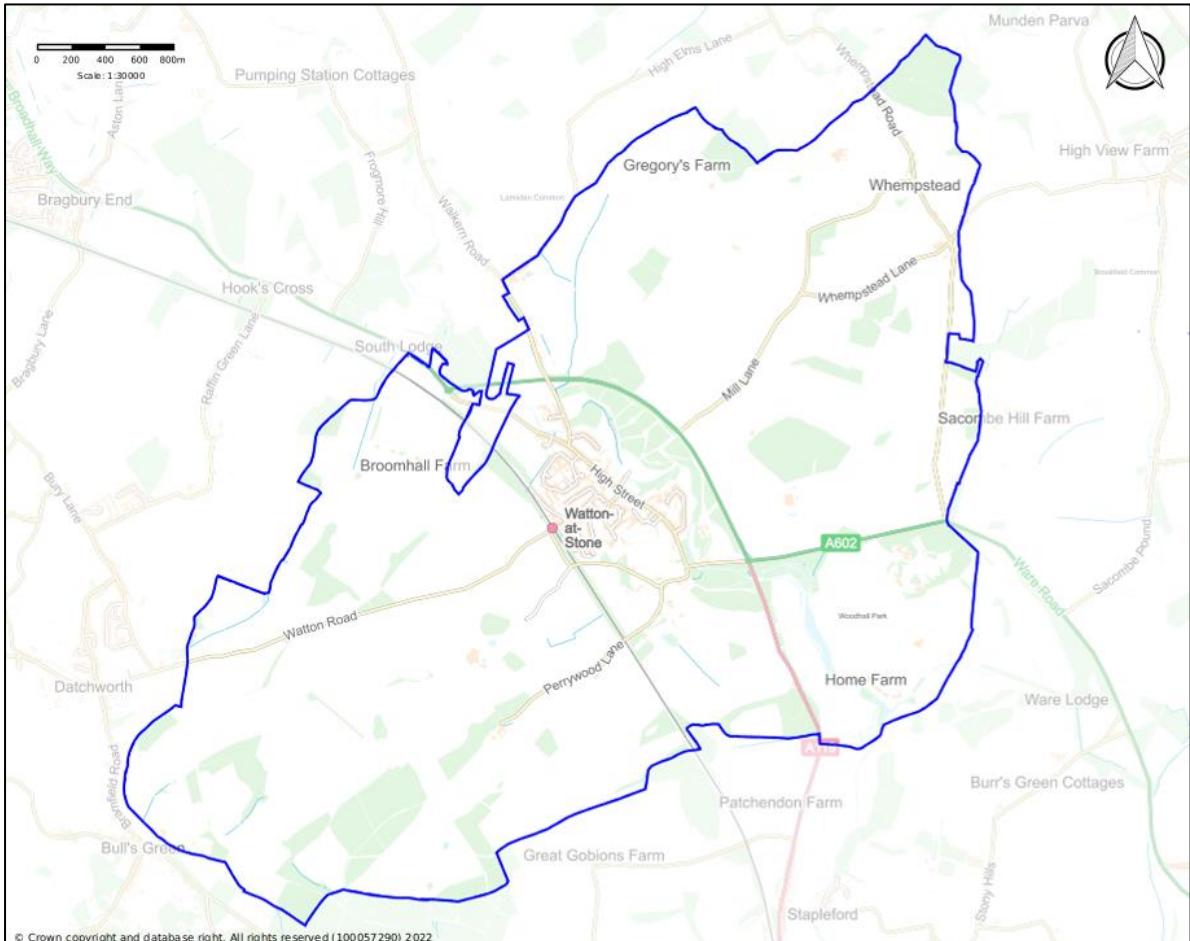


Figure 1 – Neighbourhood Plan Designated Area



Figure 2 – Aerial view of Watton-at-Stone circa 2011

Legislation

1.9 While reflecting the aspirations of local communities, Neighbourhood Plans must comply with other local and national and European policies, as required in the Localism Act. Specifically, a Neighbourhood Plan must meet four criteria, named “Basic Conditions” and set out in paragraph 8(2) of Schedule 4B to the Town and Country Planning Act (1990), as referred to by Section 38A of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act (2004):

- (a) The Plan must have appropriate regard to national policies and advice contained in the NPPF;
- (b) The Plan must contribute to the achievement of sustainable development;
- (c) The Plan must be in general conformity with the strategic policies contained in the development plan for the area of the local planning authority, in this case East Herts District Plan; and
- (d) The Plan must abide by the relevant EU regulations (or UK equivalent).

1.10 A separate document has been prepared to demonstrate how the Watton-at-Stone Neighbourhood Plan meets these Basic Conditions.

1.11 The Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) screening determination from EHDC concluded that there were likely to be significant environmental effects from implementing the Neighbourhood Plan. In accordance with the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004, an Environmental Report on the Plan was produced by AECOM. The report identifies, describes and evaluates both the effects of the Plan and reasonable alternatives. Three growth scenarios were assessed by AECOM. Scenario 3 was found to be the best performing with the most positives and no major negatives. The full Environmental Report is available on the [Neighbourhood Plan page of the Parish Council website](#).

Process of Preparing the Neighbourhood Plan

1.12 The decision to create a Neighbourhood Plan for Watton-at-Stone Parish was taken at a village meeting in November 2015. A meeting of the Parish Council and people who had expressed an interest was held in January 2016, during which the Steering Group was chosen to lead and co-ordinate development of the plan, on behalf of the Parish Council. The group is formed of volunteers who are all residents in the Watton-at-Stone Parish and includes two elected members of the Watton-at-Stone Parish Council who ensure liaison with the Parish Council.

1.13 Starting with a blank sheet of paper, the Steering Group collected existing evidence about the Parish, and ideas from people living and working in the Parish about issues relevant to the Neighbourhood Plan. The Open Day on Saturday, 23rd April 2016 was the start of the broad consultation process. The exhibition boards from the Open Day were available on the Neighbourhood Plan website.

1.14 The Open Day was followed by six weeks of active consulting by the Steering Group, Parish Council and a wider group of volunteers, going from door-to-door to ask questions, speaking to landowners, local businesses and other employers, and anyone else interested in the future development of the Parish's residential housing, commercial properties and wider amenities.

1.15 Following the consultation and evidence-gathering processes, the Steering Group pulled together the emerging themes and policies for the Neighbourhood Plan. There was a further round of consultation about these developing concepts, which began on 26 November 2016 and concluded in April 2017. A final consultation was undertaken in January 2020 by means of a public exhibition and the collection of questionnaires from the attendees. The

exhibition attracted 270 visitors and 145 questionnaires were completed. The results of the consultations are available in the [Consultation Statement](#).

1.16 The process chart below shows the later stages of the preparation of the Neighbourhood Plan.

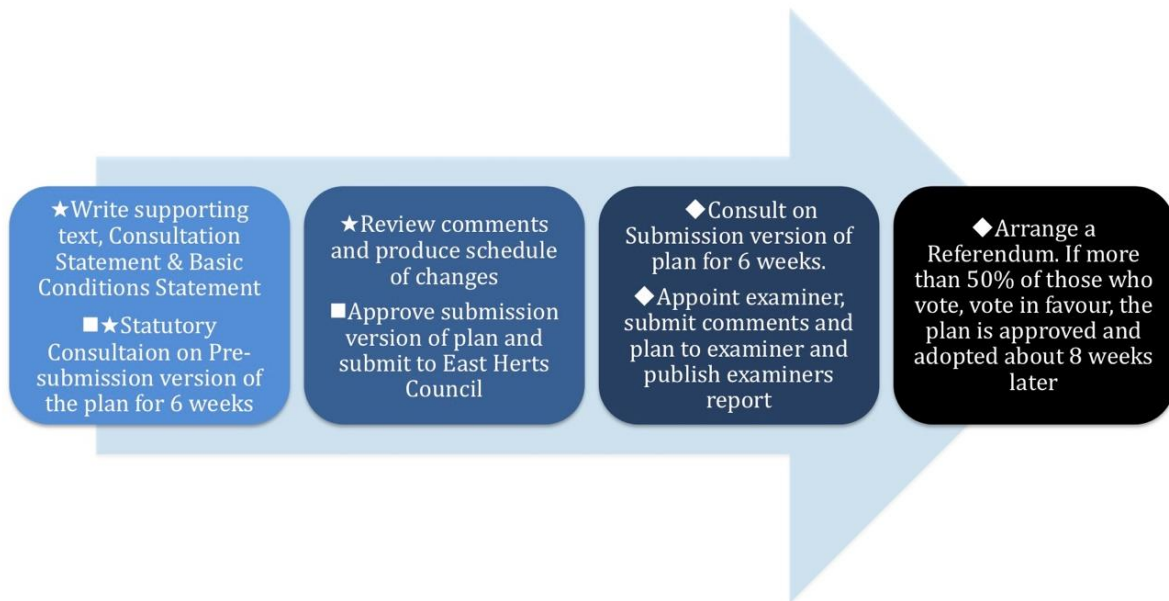


Figure 3 – Final stages of Neighbourhood Plan Process

Community Engagement Summary

1.17 The content of the Watton-at-Stone Neighbourhood Plan has been compiled from a continuous process of gathering the views of local people in the Parish using a variety of consultation approaches, including:

- An initial Parish-wide survey (more than 115 questionnaires were returned);
- Three consultation events and exhibitions;
- A public meeting (attended by over 200 people);
- A stall at the Church Fete;
- Numerous Steering Group evening meetings; and
- Meetings with local businesses, landowners and interest groups.

1.18 A separate document called the Watton-at-Stone Neighbourhood Plan Consultation Statement explains the work of the Watton-at-Stone Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group, describes the engagement techniques used, events held and the results of the public consultations. It also contains a list of consultees.

Monitoring and Review

1.19 The Neighbourhood Plan policies may be amended at intervals to remain in line with the East Herts District Plan. Any such review or update will be carried out in accordance with the required processes and procedures in place at that time.

2. Watton-at-Stone

Location, Main Features and Basic Statistics

2.1 Watton-at-Stone is a rural parish located in East Hertfordshire halfway between Hertford and Stevenage. It covers an area of about 1416.4 hectares. The Parish is nestled in the rolling countryside of the River Beane, with the village of Watton-at-Stone at its centre. The village has a bypass on its eastern side and a railway line on its western boundary. The boundary of the Parish extends well beyond the village of Watton-at-Stone itself and also includes the hamlet of Whempstead. working farms and large areas of associated farmland.

2.2 Watton-at-Stone is mostly a residential area and is well served by local amenities. As well as local shops and pubs there is a primary school, children’s centre, dentist and doctor’s surgery.

2.3 Resident population: Census data shows that in 2011 about 2,340 people lived in Watton-at-Stone and that there were approximately 970 households. In terms of age, 29.4% of residents were under 24 years old and 15.4 % are over 65 years old.



Figure 4 – Census 2011 (table KS102EW)

<https://www.nomisweb.co.uk/reports/localarea?compare=E05004745>

2.4 Dwelling types: In 2011, 25.6% of the dwellings in the Parish were detached houses, 32.6% were semi-detached houses, 24.6 % were terraced houses, 15% were purpose-built blocks of flats.

2.5 Tenure: In 2011, 67.6% of Parish dwellings were owner-occupied, 0.9% were shared ownership, 15% were social-rented and 15.3% were private-rented.

2.6 Car ownership: At the 2011 Census car ownership statistics were recorded representing a total of more than 1520 vehicles, which equated to 1.5 vehicles per household. Of the 970 households making a return, 77% had either one or two cars.

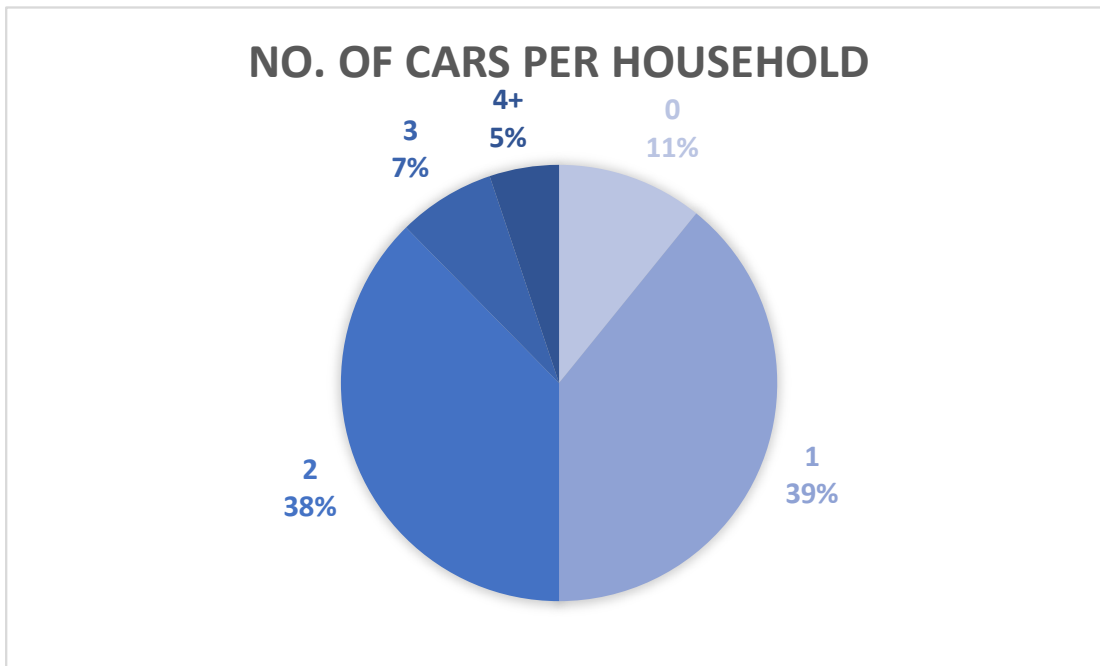


Figure 5 – Number of cars per household at 2011 Census

2.7 Employment: In 2011, 69.1% of those residents between 16 and 64 were in employment while 3.2% of the population were unemployed. 25.3% of the population was economically inactive, including retired people who made up 14.7% of the total population.

2.8 Industry: People were working in a range of industries according to the 2011 Census, with 15% of those residents in employment working in the wholesale and retail sector, 9.3% of residents working in construction, 11.7% in education, 9% in the manufacturing sector, and 8.1 % in the human health and social work activities sector.

History and Heritage

2.9 This history includes information and quotes from the Village Guide published by the Watton-at-Stone Conservation Society (first published in 1988 and subsequently updated in 2002) and also the pamphlet entitled “High Streets and Hedgerows, Watton at Stone” published by Hertford Museum in 2015.

2.10 The name Watton was first recorded in an 11th century publication of the 10th century Anglo-Saxon Wills as Wattun, and in the Domesday Book as both Wodtune and Watone. The “Stone” appeared for the first time in about 1300 (Watton atte Stone, 1311) and is presumed to refer to a prehistoric or Roman mark stone, a lump of Hertfordshire puddingstone, which can be seen at the roadside at the north end of the village, outside the private residence which was formerly the Wagon and Horses public house. The Domesday Book in 1086 records that the Parish was owned by the Crown and split into four different manors – Watton, Crowborough, Watkins Hall and Woodhall. These names still have significance in the village today.

2.11 The site of the original village was probably on the higher ground by Watton Green, close to the church, and a moat still to be seen by Watton Green marks the site of the old Crowborough manor house. Indeed, even as late as the 1950s, four cottages were still occupied on land adjacent to the Green. In the 12th or 13th century, with the decreasing importance of the cross-country Roman road and the increasing importance of the old north-south route between the market town of Hertford and the Great North Road coaching stop of Stevenage, the inns and houses of the village migrated downhill and established the village along the new highway now known as the High Street.

2.12 The most important building in the Parish, although outside the settlement itself, is Woodhall Park (now Heath Mount School). It is a Grade 1 Listed building built between 1777 and 1782.

2.13 A significant section of the village settlement has been identified as a conservation area which was adopted by East Herts District Council in 2014. This area extends from Watton Green along the High Street including land either side, from the Walkern Road at the northern end to where the old road to Hertford joins the A119. Conservation Area status effectively gives all the trees and buildings within the area certain basic protection which it will be important to retain.

2.14 There are 25 Grade II Listed Buildings in the conservation area. Most of these originate from the 16th and 17th centuries with the 15th, 18th, 19th and 20th centuries also being represented.

2.15 Of the other buildings in the village, one of the most important is Watton Place. The house is Grade II* Listed and dates from the 15th century with later alterations up to the 19th Century. It is believed that it was originally a two-bay open hall. It retains some fine twisted brick chimney stacks which were restored in 1991 when the building was converted for use as a medical centre — the Watton Place Clinic. The adjoining flint wall is also listed.

2.16 The farmhouses within the Parish represent a number of different architectural periods and Broom Hall dates from the late-16th century, retaining some attractive brickwork. A schedule of listed buildings within the Parish may be found on [Historic England's website](#).

2.17 The village has been subject to its greatest number of developments since the end of the Second World War. These have been largely piecemeal with little thought being given to their relationship to each other or the older parts of the village. It is one of the objectives of this Neighbourhood Plan that in the future any developments permitted are considered to be in line with its coherent strategy and are of benefit to the village rather than a detraction from it.

2.18 These post-war developments include Beane Road (1946), Glebe Close (1948), Rectory Lane (1948), Hockerill (1956), Lammas Road (1960) north end of High Street (1960), Great Innings (1964, 1977 and 2000), Rivershill (1966 and 1986), and Hazeldell (1970) as well as several individual houses and in-fills.

2.19 In 1986 there was a spate of planning applications: 28 dwellings now known as Motts Close, and 14 dwellings on the site of the Beanside Service Station, now called The Beanside. In 1993, 4 dwellings (Aylotts Court) were built behind the buildings known as Porch Cottages in the High Street, and an outline planning application was approved for 70 dwellings on land adjacent to the railway station, part of which had been used as an oil storage depot. Some 76 dwellings were eventually built as Moorymead Close together with a parking area for the station.

2.20 Conversion of the former Holden du Cros factory and barn into several dwellings known as Newmans Court was completed in 1994. In 1998, the old bakery behind the grocery shop in the High Street was developed to provide an enlarged shopping area and three flats. During 2001, 12 houses on the Watton Service Station site in the High Street were completed and named Long Meadow.

2.21 In 2012, 111 houses were built on the last remaining field between the western edge of the village envelope and the railway line on a field formerly owned by HCC now named Gatekeepers Meadow.

2.22 There are now some 1080 homes in the village, many of which have been built since 1980. As mentioned, many of these developments have been made with little regard to previous ones and with little investment in improving the village infrastructure. It is therefore vitally important that, before the proposals for the developments envisaged in policies WAS 3 and WAS 4 are approved, it is confirmed that all the major services are capable of coping

with the increased demand. This includes but is not limited to water, sewage, drainage, electricity, gas and telephone services including high speed broadband. The impact on soft services such as increased demand on the GP medical practice and the village's primary school should also be examined and expanded as necessary.

2.23 Since 1980, the village has seen two significant events which were designed to improve village services. These are the re-opening of the train station in 1982 and the opening of the A602 bypass in 1984. These projects have been of benefit to the village but have been contributory factors in Watton-at-Stone being selected by East Herts District Council as a Group 1 village for further development. Some residents responding to the consultation events has considered them to have been a "double-edged sword".

2.24 The opening of the station has meant that Watton-at-Stone has attracted residents who commute into London but also non-residents who drive to the station and who park in the surrounding roads as there is insufficient parking at the station. One of the objectives in designing the circular walk is to promote walking and cycling from the new developments in WAS 3 and WAS 4 to both the station and the school thus not increasing use of cars by residents.

2.25 Whilst the bypass has improved north/south traffic there has been no improvement to east/west traffic which has increased considerably in this time. Therefore, the impact of greater numbers of vehicles using the western entry/exit to the village and the High Street needs further consideration. The bypass also created a new boundary to the village which is being exploited in this planning period. This Neighbourhood Plan has recognised the effect of this boundary and it has been one of the contributory factors in deciding to permit development of a greater number of houses than demanded by the East Herts District Plan. However, it is expected that the design of the revised Green Belt boundary will protect the village from any future development.

2.26 Few of the people living within the village now work in the village since, apart from the village shops and pubs, there are few opportunities for employment (there were previously some small industrial units in Mill Lane, but they are now derelict). Watton-at-Stone is now, therefore, 'commuter land' and its residents travel to Stevenage, Hoddesdon, Hertford and other areas for employment, including also central London (by train at a 2020 season ticket cost of £3344 per annum). Since the Covid-19 pandemic many more residents of the village have been working from home, a practice which may continue in the future. Greater consideration should therefore be given to the load on the village infrastructure to provide the appropriate support.

2.27 There are several shops in the village which are well used and much valued by both villagers and people who live nearby.

3. Vision and Objectives

Our Vision

3.1 Our vision statement is:

Watton-at-Stone will continue to be a thriving village hub, with a strong and diverse community. It will be well served by green spaces, local amenities, good physical and digital infrastructure, and will support local enterprise. The Parish will protect all aspects of its heritage, including the character of its dwellings, its natural environment and rural setting. At the same time, the village will welcome new residents and accept thoughtful, well designed, sustainable development, in line with the needs of existing and future residents and balanced by appropriate additional infrastructure and amenities for the expanded community.

Overarching Objectives

3.2 In accordance with the NPPF, all plans should promote sustainable development, achieving this through the three overarching and interdependent objectives:

- Economic sustainability
- Social sustainability
- Environmental sustainability

3.3 Sustainable development should be pursued in a positive way with the presumption in favour of sustainable development at the heart of every plan, but taking into account and reflecting the character, needs and opportunities of each area.

3.4 The Neighbourhood Plan adopts an outlook that incorporates the aspiration for higher quality housing development, better transport provision, a wider range of public amenities, access to quality green spaces and a healthier local economy.

3.5 From the information obtained during the consultation it became clear that most of the respondents were generally happy with the facilities and amenities currently available. However, there were consistent requests to improve the sports facilities particularly for football (especially youth football) and for improvements to the village environment. This can be evidenced by the responses to the spending priorities identified during the consultation process and detailed in the Consultation Statement.

3.6 Based on the collected responses to questions about what people both liked and disliked about the village, it has been possible to develop a series of objectives for the Neighbourhood Plan which will enhance and improve life in the village in accordance with the wishes of the majority of the residents. The policies described in this document are designed to deliver those objectives.

Planning Objectives

3.7 Extensive consultation with residents has enabled the distillation of comments and suggestion into the following objectives. These were presented to the community at the January 2020 exhibition. Support was expressed in 148 written responses. Table 1 below lists the objective numbers relating to each section in the Neighbourhood Plan.

Watton-at-Stone Neighbourhood Plan 2017-2033

Obj. No.	Housing Development Strategy
1	Deliver a housing growth strategy tailored to the needs and context of Watton-at-Stone to 2033.
2	Ensure that brownfield sites are used for new housing developments where possible.
3	Ensure new housing is in keeping with the surrounding area, lying low in the Beane Valley
4	Promote high-quality design with a mix of house types suitable for the future needs of the village
5	Ensure housing density balances the sensitive semi-rural setting with the efficient use of land and preservation of high-quality agricultural land
6	Ensure accessibility by sustainable modes to bus stops, the station, the school, and village facilities, promoting safe public streets and spaces
7	Reduce traffic impacts of new development, ensure appropriate parking solutions for it, and provide infrastructure for sustainable modes of transport
8	Seek on-going improvements to utility infrastructure and digital connectivity
9	Ensure that development proposals supported in this plan, on the edge of the village, create a new clearly defined Green Belt boundary
Obj. No.	Sustainable, affordable, accessible transport
10	Encourage the use of, and lobby for better, sustainable transport networks including public transport, cycle routes, footways and public rights of way
Obj. No.	Community facilities and amenities
11	Support the village's key community services and facilities
12	Ensure adequate provision for Parish children to attend the local school
13	Facilitate the development of new football facilities and encourage appropriate use of Green Belt land for sensitively designed outdoor leisure
Obj. No.	Natural and historic environment
14	Make the most of Watton-at-Stone's rural aspect and landscape setting, protecting key views
15	Maintain and enhance nature conservation, wildlife and biodiversity
16	Protect the historic fabric, character, and rural identity of the village and Parish of Watton-at-Stone, including listed buildings, non-designated heritage assets and the Conservation Area and its setting
Obj. No.	Support for business
17	Support appropriate development for local businesses and employment opportunities, including home working

Table 1 Objectives relating to each section in the Neighbourhood Plan

4. Policies Map

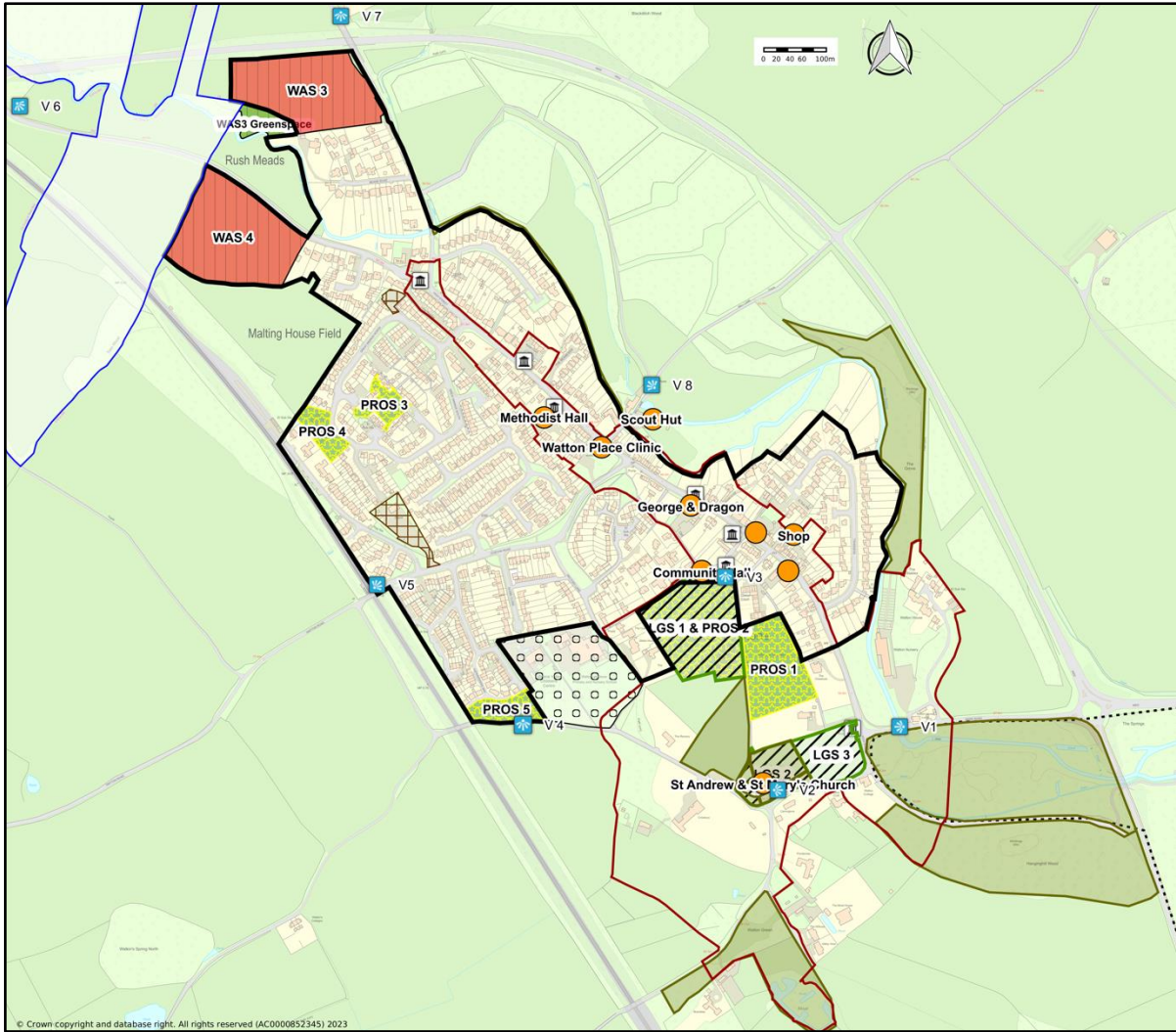


Figure 6 – Policies Map

Note: An A1 size version of this Policies Map with key can be found [here](#)

Watton-at-Stone Policies Map Key















<p>Neighbourhood Plan Area</p> 	<p>Village Boundary</p> 
<p>Housing Development Sites</p> 	<p>WAS3 Greenspace</p> 
<p>Historic Park & Garden (Woodhall Park)</p> 	<p>Local Wildlife Sites</p> 
<p>Conservation Area</p> 	<p>Local Green Spaces</p> 
<p>Brownfield Land</p>  WAS 5	<p>Protected Recreational Open Space</p> 
<p>Non-designated Heritage Assets</p> 	<p>Community Assets</p> 
<p>Primary and Nursery School</p> 	<p>Protected Views</p> 

Figure 7 – Policies Map Key

5. Development Strategy Masterplan and Design Codes

Development Strategy Masterplan

5.1 Through the initial stages of the development of the Neighbourhood Plan and the responses made by the residents to the consultation events, it was felt necessary to develop an overall vision for the village in the form of a masterplan. This is represented in an artist's impression (see Figure 8). This emerged from gaining an understanding of the village, its assets, its needs, heritage and consideration of the thoughts and aspirations obtained through the engagement with the community. This masterplan creates a framework which provides form and purpose to the different areas, connectivity and plots of land.

5.2 The factors affecting the physical containment of the village are the bypass to the north and east, the railway line to the west and Church Lane to the south. These have been used to plan the future shape of the village. Through the centre of this area runs the High Street which has a strong heritage value with a number of key buildings and amenities. Running parallel to the High Street in a sinuous route is the River Beane, a chalk stream of ecological importance. The Beane also creates the setting for extensive open woodland, public green areas and an accompanying flood zone.

5.3 Engagement with the community has identified the need for a number of new amenities. These have been carefully integrated into the overall vision both complementing the existing and embracing new development. These include improved provision of youth sports, completion of circular paths and enhancement of the natural environment.

5.4 Within the built area of the village there exist a number of brownfield sites which are ideal for new housing development. These are seen as a priority. There are also two open-field sites which lie within the physical containment mentioned above, which have been deemed suitable for future housing developments and, subsequently, release from the current Green Belt boundary.

5.5 These sites present the opportunity for new sustainable housing to serve the growing needs of the village and to support the existing amenities, services, businesses and shops. The vision aspires to introduce a variety and mix of housing types which are within well-designed developments both in keeping with the existing village vernacular as well as being innovative and appropriate for today's society.

5.6 The new physical connections through and between these new developments and onto adjoining existing paths is seen as a fundamental step in ensuring a well-connected village, where everyone is encouraged to walk and cycle.

5.7 This approach of creating an overall vision, along with the accompanying policies and design code, establishes a long-term vision for Watton-at-Stone, supporting the village to grow within its limits and providing an attractive place for all ages of people to live and for the community to prosper.

5.8 The master plan in Figure 8 shows an aerial view of the village from the north-east. The two new developments envisaged in the masterplan (Policies WAS 3 and WAS 4) are illustrated in the foreground, along with part of the circular walk that will ensure connectivity and integration of the extended village with existing facilities and transport services.



Figure 8 – Artists Impression of overall vision for the village

Design Code

Introduction

5.9 The ambition of the community is for Watton-at-Stone to be a well-designed place considering character, community and climate. The design of previous new housing developments within the village have fallen short of the aspirations of the Parish Council and the community. A descriptive Design Code, based on the National Design Guide issued by the Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government, has been written into the Neighbourhood Plan in order to address the ambitions for future housing proposals. Criteria in the policies in this plan comes above the Design Code in order of importance, particularly for specific sites.

5.10 The process of producing a neighbourhood plan for Watton-at-Stone has raised many questions on the appetite for additional homes within the village. In order to build significantly more housing, it was necessary to release Green Belt land. Two sites came forward as logical extensions to the village boundary. A number of meetings were held with the landowners and their development teams to discuss the nature of developments on these sites. The Design Code will be instrumental in achieving good design on these two sites as well as on the brownfield sites identified in this Neighbourhood Plan and other sites that will come forward in the future.

5.11 Good design has an impact on all aspects of the built and natural environment, be it a simple extension to an existing house or a large residential or commercial development. This design guide has been produced to provide guidance on how development can be carried out in accordance with good design practice relative to Watton-at-Stone. [Policy WAS 6](#), instructs that the Watton-at-Stone Design Code is relevant to all developments in Watton-at-Stone. The Code forms a statutory part of the Neighbourhood Plan and should be used to prepare applications for planning permission in the Parish.

5.12 Good design translates into more than the appearance of buildings. It is important in both small residential extensions and large-scale developments where form and materials are introduced, and new streets and spaces are created. Functionality and practicality are

embedded in the design and are as important as the visual quality of a building, village or rural intervention.

5.13 On-street parking in residential areas is seen as undesirable. Infrastructure should be provided for sustainable travel along with the provision of adequate off-street parking in new residential areas for its village location, which leads to more attractive streets. Garages which are often later converted to additional residential accommodation can exacerbate parking problems so flexible and appropriate provision for off street parking provision should be provided in accordance with the Design Code.

5.14 Perhaps the greatest benefits of good design are felt in our own homes and the spaces around them. Well-designed neighbourhoods help to build communities, give residents a sense of belonging, make residents feel safe, and ensure new developments are accepted by the wider community. Often this can be through simple approaches such as natural surveillance, an easy technique created when new streets and public open spaces are overlooked by windows and doors.

5.15 Good design in all developments must be inclusive and accessible for everyone, have a positive impact on the environment, be integrated into its immediate and wider surroundings, provide flexibility for future change, be easily maintained and deliver a return on investment.

5.16 Listed below are some of the key objectives that set the scene for design quality. Throughout the design process they should remain the focus of the creative thinking, with some being more important than others depending on the project. These objectives follow the "ten characteristics" in the National Design Guide: Context, Identity, Built Form, Movement, Nature, Public Spaces, Uses, Homes and Buildings, Resources and Lifespan.

Context

5.17 An understanding of the existing site and its surroundings is key to any development. A detailed site appraisal should be submitted with any planning application for major residential development proposals. It is necessary to consider the physical aspects of the site and this should include topography, existing drainage, natural features, ecology, access points, views and vistas and relation to existing development. The understanding of these components will identify the key constraints and opportunities that may impact on future development.

Design Principles to enhance the surroundings:

- Adjacent building lines of adjoining properties and the size, height, vernacular and materials of any adjacent buildings should be considered when assessing proposals.
- The relationship of the site to the wider street scene and the settlement as a whole including views of the site from open countryside, should be considered when assessing proposals.
- The character and significance of any existing buildings, walls and other structures already on the site should be noted. Their potential for reuse as part of the new development should be fully investigated.
- The contribution made by trees or other planting, landscape and biodiversity features within or adjoining the site should be optimised.
- The appearance of the development must respond to its surroundings, reflect the scale and character of the local area and help to strengthen the character of the village as a whole.
- Where appropriate, new development should be influenced by local history, culture and heritage. Adjacent heritage buildings or features should ultimately be preserved or enhanced by new development and their value used to maximum benefit in maintaining and creating character.

- Existing topography is a key factor within Watton-at-Stone and new development should respond to the contours and be nestled into lower levels to preserve views and the horizon line of the village (the existing line formed by the heights of existing buildings).
- The site's orientation should be assessed and used, where appropriate, to influence the design of climatically efficient housing in response to climate change, both in the overall positioning of the house and internal room layout.
- Development should be well integrated into the village and consideration given to links, paths and other features outside the boundary of the development plot.
- The local vernacular should be assessed, and the design should respond positively towards it. There is also an opportunity for new contemporary and complementary developments within the village, along with a variety of styles, as these will be valued as tomorrow's heritage.
- New development should enhance and encourage existing flora and fauna in the environs of the site.

Identity

5.18 All new developments must be attractive from both outside and from within, they must have character and be distinctive, creating a true sense of place. All design proposals should be informed through contextual analysis of the built, natural, and historic environment and respond to the scale, height, density, urban grain, settlement pattern and layout, massing, type, materials, vernacular styles of construction and landscape details of the surrounding area.

Design Principles to achieve attractiveness and distinctiveness:

- Both the buildings and the landscape need to be visually attractive and somewhere both future and existing residents wish to live.
- The scale, building proportions, street proportions and density need to be carefully studied to develop a comfortable and inclusive environment with regards to height, scale, massing and relationship between buildings.
- The roofscape linked to views from outside the development needs to be studied to ensure the existing village horizon line (the existing line formed by the heights of existing buildings) is not altered and that the new development considers and maximises the backdrop.
- Any development within the village should ensure that a vision of the development is established which brings buildings and open spaces together with their surroundings.
- Development layouts should be easily understood and navigable.
- New developments need to be integrated and accessible extensions of the existing village for both existing residents to be able to pass through and for those living there to feel part of the wider community.
- New places should be memorable and make use of variation, features, views and special parts of the site.

Built Form

5.19 The design of individual buildings, groups of buildings and their relation to streets and open spaces is important in ensuring a successful development within the village. This should consider variation within the plots that follows the evolution, character and urban growth of the established village to ensure that new contemporary and complementary developments are seen and valued as tomorrow's heritage.

Design principles for a coherent pattern of development:

Layout

- The scheme should relate to the scale, character and pattern of surrounding buildings.
- Existing features and amenities should be retained, made accessible and integrated in such a way as to promote physical activity.
- Key views, focal points or landmarks should be identified and considered as part of the development.
- Land should be used efficiently whilst respecting the existing landscape character and green infrastructure. A density of 30 units per hectare should be achieved within any development. This will ensure the efficient use of land, while avoiding over-dense development which is not in keeping with the village character.
- Private amenity space for homes should be regular in shape allowing a good well-proportioned garden. Rear gardens should be a minimum of 10 metres in length and should be generally flat and usable.
- Residential houses should be set back off the road by a minimum of 5 metres if parking is to be allowed on the front garden. Alternatively, the development could include a restrictive condition removing the right to park on front gardens, reducing the minimum set back to be 3 metres. Garages should be a minimum of 6 metres from the back of footpath to allow the opening of the front garage door and a car's length on the driveway. This approach allows the provision of 2 car spaces per property.
- Front gardens should be green and landscaped to provide a soft street scene and improve biodiversity on the site.
- Buildings should be attractive and respond to the street, have active frontages and provide natural surveillance.
- There should be a clear distinction between public and private spaces and spaces between buildings. Left over spaces which have no value must be avoided.
- New development should be sustainable and resilient to climate change by taking into account landform, layout, building orientation, massing and landscape to minimise energy consumption and mitigate water run-off and flood risks.

Building design

- An architectural approach with variation should be established which is contemporary and complementary to the existing range of building types in the village. This needs to extend through to the choice of materials and individual detailing of the facades.
- The heights of buildings should be a maximum of 2 storeys except where topography allows additional height (for example, an additional half storey), and retains the proportions relative to the street context and character of the village. Any buildings on higher ground need to be lower in height and demonstrate that they fit in to the context through sections and visualisations.
- The design of the buildings should relate to the form, height and proportions of existing buildings in the village.
- Building elevations should relate to and take cues from existing well-designed buildings in the village. The arrangement of windows and openings is simple and aligned.
- Corner-turning buildings can provide activity and natural surveillance for streets and spaces that are overlooked by ground floor windows on both facades facing the street and/or space. These should be encouraged and blank gable-ends at corners are to be avoided.

- Where garages and carports have been integrated within the frontage of the building, they must not create blank frontages to streets and spaces.
- Integrated external storage for bins (including recycling facilities) must be considered as part of the architectural and landscape design.

Landscape Design

- Open space must be integrated within the heart of the development and create a positive, attractive and usable amenity space. It must be designed in a location which is easily accessible for residents of the scheme and of the wider village.
- Planting should be used to soften the mass of the built form and enhance the overall development. The choice of planting should add character and biodiversity to the development.
- Trees should be carefully designed into the public domain to enhance streets and spaces with consideration to their mature size.
- Open amenity spaces should provide for all members of the community and be designed to be inclusive. Where appropriate, spaces should be multifunctional to get the best value out of the external spaces.
- An in-perpetuity maintenance plan must be put in place to ensure the natural development of planting and trees as part of the value and character of the development.
- Pedestrian and cycle paths need to be integrated within the development, across and outside its boundary to ensure adjoining links to surrounding streets, spaces and access to sustainable transport.
- Paths should be accessible for all with a maximum gradient of 1 in 20, wherever possible. Their widths should be relative to their use and significance.
- The paving and surfacing materials proposed for footpaths, cycleways and vehicle highways are robust and durable for the street type proposed.
- Lighting should be considered on main linking paths to encourage use and enhance the perception of safety.
- Fence lines at key development entrances and abutting open recreation space should be avoided - these should be dealt with through appropriate layout of the buildings, green infrastructure and structural landscape. The length of any such fencing must be minimised.
- Edges abutting the open countryside should be designed to create an integrated soft edge.

Movement

5.20 All new developments must promote healthy lifestyles by linking to destinations outside the development by walking and cycling. This should be achieved through the creation of connecting paths and the new village circular path. The layout must be pedestrian-friendly, comfortable and attractive for people to leave their houses and choose to walk, cycle or use public transport rather than using their car for movements within the confines of the village.

Design principles for accessibility and ease of moving around:

- The scheme should have a network of streets, cycleways and footpaths which connect to each other and to neighbouring land. All routes should connect, be appropriate in width and provide direct pedestrian and cycle links to local amenities within the village, such as the school, bus stops and train station.
- New streets should have a logical order and a street hierarchy which are expressed by their width, built enclosure, frontage, parking arrangements, materials and street

planting. Footpath widths should also respond to anticipated movement patterns and general usage. This can include shared space where appropriate.

- The design and character of the streets should promote low vehicular speeds by introducing shared surfaces in cul de sacs and integrated natural methods of traffic calming, where appropriate.
- Streets and spaces should be convenient, safe and easy for all to use, including wheelchair users. The amount of street furniture should be kept to a minimum.
- Access should be provided to local services, facilities and open spaces. The design of these links should promote social interaction and contribute to health and wellbeing.
- A sufficient level of well-integrated and imaginative solutions for car and bicycle parking should be integrated into the design both on and off the street, considering the use of green infrastructure.
- Each property must have its own off-street parking. Garages and car ports should be carefully integrated within building frontages so as not to break up the enclosure or the definition of the street.
- Parking should not be a dominant visual element. It should not take the place of front gardens. Extensive areas of hard standing and car-dominated frontage should be avoided.
- All parking areas should be located to enable surveillance from adjoining properties. Rear parking courts should only be considered when all on-street options have been exhausted, ensuring they are small in scale, and avoid a large expanse of hard landscaping.
- Parallel parking should not be located at the front of a development as it detracts from the overall visual character and creates an abundance of hardstanding.
- Adequate visitor parking spaces must be located throughout the development and should be easy to recognise.

Nature

5.21 Watton-at-Stone village is set within the Hertfordshire countryside and within the Green Belt. Any new development must enhance the natural setting, improve biodiversity through a considered environmental design which considers ecosystems, the way people live and green and blue infrastructure.

Design principles for enhancing and optimising biodiversity:

- Biodiversity should preferably be enhanced by a minimum of 10% with reference to the [Environment Act 2021](#). Schemes should be delivered that lead to no net loss of habitat, as required by [A Green Future](#) (the government's 25 year environment plan.)
- The physical features and topography of the site should be used to their best advantage and the development should be integrated with the local landscape character.
- The development should strengthen and retain existing features of biodiversity and ecological value such as hedgerows, ditches and watercourses and their species.
- A joined-up network of open spaces should be located where existing and new residents are able to have easy access to promote physical activity in addition to creating new habitats to increase biodiversity value.
- Green and wildlife corridors, including provision for hedgehog highways, should be designed to extend through the development.
- The scheme should incorporate sustainable urban drainage as an integral part of the development in an imaginative way with any attenuation areas integrated into the layout, doubling as amenity space and not segregated. This could include open swales, rain gardens (see [Appendix I – Glossary of Terms](#)) and rainwater

harvesting. SuDS features should be located so as not to reduce useable designated public open space.

- Trees and soft landscaping should be incorporated into the design that reflect the layout and character of the street. Species selected for the scheme should be appropriate to the environment and to their location, both at the time of planting and once mature.
- Climate change measures should be considered as part of the overall scheme and with individual interventions.
- Where appropriate, the landscape and material design should consider measures to reduce air pollution.
- An optimum balance between nature and people needs to be determined, based on the assets of the site and the way in which it is envisaged that people will interact within it. This includes areas for play and recreation promoting health, wellbeing and access to nature.
- An appropriate maintenance and management regime should be put in place which considers nature and biodiversity.
- Each house should have integrated rainwater butts to capture rainwater for gardening purposes.

Public Spaces

5.22 The quality of open space and the way in which new streets and spaces are designed has a direct effect on how people feel about a place. The whole community benefits from a commitment to usable green space. Access to open space is also shown to have a direct impact on the health and wellbeing of those able to take advantage of it.

Design principles for safe, social and inclusive public spaces:

- A clear and permeable (accessible) hierarchy of streets, routes and spaces should be provided, to create safe and convenient ease of movement by all users. This should include and link to a well-defined network of green spaces and access to areas outside of the development area.
- Streets and spaces should be overlooked, creating a positive relationship between fronts and backs of buildings, with clearly defined public and private space.
- The location of open spaces within new development, needs to be integrated, to ensure they are well used, passed through and a focal point for the community. Open space on the perimeter of development plots should be avoided.
- Attractive outdoor spaces should be created that are suitable for all ages, to promote interaction, inclusivity, that provide social spaces for the community to rest, gather and meet and that support facilities for physical activity, including seating and cycle parking. This should include consideration for outdoor working and studying areas.
- A high-quality public realm should be established, with well-managed and maintained public areas including the site's natural features and topography.
- A range of street typologies should be developed with different scales and characters, and with strategically positioned open spaces where people can meet, play and socialise.
- Open space must be of an appropriate size, shape and layout to meet the needs of the scheme's residents.
- Amenity spaces must not be compromised by the location of parking areas, garages and refuse storage areas.
- Elements such as light columns, sign poles and seating should be designed, appropriate and kept to a minimum to avoid clutter.

- Street furniture positions should be coordinated so they align within one another within public spaces and streets.
- Lighting should be used to create safe, inviting routes and spaces but excessive lighting should be avoided.
- All parking solutions and space to accommodate street trees must be thoroughly considered early in the design process.
- Cycle stands for public use should be provided at the edges of key open spaces and playgrounds.

Uses

5.23 The development areas offer an opportunity for high quality innovative designs which both respond to the village context as well as providing diversity, variety, choice and a wide range of house types and tenures.

Design principles for mixed and integrated design:

- Each development should be of mixed tenure with different housing types interspersed rather than segregated. This will ensure inclusivity and richness in the design.
- The currently proposed development sites within the village are suitable for residential development. Any other proposed uses will need to ensure they are viable and do not detract for the current amenities, services, businesses and shops.
- A mix of property sizes and types with 1-4 bedrooms, starter homes and bungalows are deemed appropriate. Blocks of flats are not considered appropriate so any proposed flats will need to be of exceptional design and in character within the village, especially on the current suggested development plots on the edge of the Green Belt.
- The needs of all users must be taken into account when designing access to and from dwellings, open spaces and other landscape features.
- Different house types should be considered, including those for different ages, families, multi generation living, home-working and opportunities for self-build and custom-build. Standard house types need to be developed and reimagined to respond to changes in living style, accentuated due to Covid 19, including the need for home-working space and facilities for extended family groups.
- Opportunities for special forms or buildings, responding to their intended uses, should be considered as part of the masterplan and design process to help with corner units and specific plot conditions.
- Individual dwellings must be designed to be flexible, capable of adaptation to meet the changing needs of residents in the future – such as needing to adapt a home to reflect a loss of mobility, adapting a home to allow home-working or caring for others.
- The quality of affordable housing should be as good as that of open-market housing, including how it looks aesthetically, to encourage social inclusion and community cohesion.

Homes and buildings

5.24 New housing must be both attractive and functional and all aspects of providing a good living environment should be considered in the overall internal and external layout.

Design principles for functional, healthy and sustainable places:

- Places should be safe, secure and welcoming for all, including the elderly and disabled.
- The needs of all potential users of the development should be understood and addressed to ensure inclusive design.

- Safe communities should be created, reducing the likelihood of crime and antisocial behaviour by utilising Secured by Design (SBD) guidance and seeking accreditation to SBD by contacting the local [Crime Prevention Design Advisor](#).
- Integrated refuse and recycling bins should be provided. This will also help to create a sense of order and reduce litter and vandalism.
- Collection facilities for dog waste refuse should be provided, located in appropriate locations adjacent to public open spaces.
- Living spaces within houses should look out onto streets and spaces, increasing natural surveillance and creating a relationship with the external environment.
- There should be a clear demarcation between public and private land. Residential buildings should be adequately set back from footpaths ensuring the creation of defensible space.
- All buildings should be fronted by main entrances/front doors which provide direct access to the street or space, helping to activate the public realm.
- All residential units must have adequate outdoor amenity. Target garden size should be a minimum of 100 square metres for individual houses, with minimum garden length of 10 metres, and should be well laid out for maximum use, optimising orientation and sunlight. Other types of gardens such as communal gardens can be considered for different forms of residential development.
- Where new development backs on to the rear gardens of existing housing, the back to back distances of the windows of the proposed dwelling to the windows of the existing dwellings should be a minimum of 25 metres, wherever possible.
- Boundary treatments for secure and private amenity space must be considered as part of the design and plot layout. Long elevations of fences along streets must be avoided. Gable walls and long fence lines should be avoided along key movement paths and corridors.
- New Green Belt boundaries should be clearly defined and, as appropriate, enable views and connections to the countryside. Density should be used to create enclosure and define open spaces, responding to the nature of the site and its immediate context.
- Sufficient space and accessibility must be provided for bins and refuse as part of the design of each house. These storage areas need to be convenient for residents and attractive where they can be seen from streets and spaces. Consideration should be given to collective refuse methods for specific items of recycling.
- Utilities and their required infrastructure need to be designed into the built form of each house rather than a bolt-on afterwards.
- Utility boxes, cable runs, manholes and maintenance access points should be integrated positively into the overall scheme and should not conflict with landscape features, tree planting and/or the design of the public realm.
- All new developments must include the installation and provision of superfast fibre broadband to each housing unit.
- Cycle storage must be integral to the design of the scheme and individual houses to ensure bikes are easily accessible and secure, to encourage cycling.
- The internal layout of buildings should be designed, where possible, so that habitable rooms and amenity space do not face noise sources, such as roads or railway lines.
- External activities such as play areas should be located close to the properties they serve, but far enough away to avoid noise disturbance.

Resources

5.25 The opportunity should be taken to develop new homes that are truly sustainable, which are accessible by sustainable modes, conserve natural resources and are economic to live in for the inhabitants.

5.26 Developments should mitigate climate change by working towards zero carbon, adapting to climate change and meeting targets to reduce carbon dioxide emissions. This may be through measures including:

- Adherence to high standards of energy efficiency including optimal levels of thermal insulation, passive ventilation and cooling and passive solar design;
- The use of renewable and low-carbon energy supply systems, and connection to low carbon heat networks;
- The efficient use of natural resources in new buildings; and
- Forms of development which encourage walking, cycling and the use of public transport instead of journeys by private car.

5.27 Developments should achieve the following:

- Developments should meet and seek to exceed current national and local policy in relation to sustainability and carbon reduction. A 31% carbon reduction improvement upon the requirements of Building Regulations Approved Document Part L 2013 or any higher standard required under subsequent national planning policy or Building Regulations is recommended;
- A minimum provision of 50% on-site renewables (where this would equate to at least 50% of new homes having either ground or air source heat pumps or Photovoltaic panels (PV) installed as part of the roof construction) (see also guidance in [East Herts District Plan Sustainability SPD March 2021](#));
- Indoor Air Quality (IAQ) and overheating risk performance should be calculated for proposed new dwellings and a recognised quality protocol implemented which ensures that the 'as built' performance of the homes matches this calculation (e.g., current Building Regulations);
- All proposed residential units should achieve a water efficiency standard of no more than 110 litres per person per day as calculated using the methodology in Building Regulations Approved Document G, in accordance with District Plan Policy WAT4 or achieve any higher standard than this that is required under subsequent national planning policy or Building Regulations.

5.28 All proposed developments should demonstrate through Sustainability Statements how they will contribute to mitigating climate change, adapt to its impacts and contribute to meeting targets to reduce carbon dioxide emissions by means of the above measures.

5.29 The Neighbourhood Plan Area falls within the 'Sand and Gravel Belt' as identified in HCC's Adopted Minerals Local Plan. It contains the most concentrated deposits of sand and gravel in Hertfordshire and is identified as a Mineral Safeguarding Area. Proposals within the Neighbourhood Plan Area may not be determined by EHDC until HCC has been given the opportunity to comment on whether the proposals would unacceptably sterilise mineral resources.

Design principles for sustainable development:

- All schemes must adopt sustainable development principles including:
 - Reducing energy use and the need for energy supply;
 - Using renewable energy sources;
 - Choosing 'low impact' and local building materials from sustainable sources which are high quality, built to last and have recycled content where possible;

- Minimising levels of waste arising from development; and
- Prioritising the use of brownfield land.
- Thought should be given to the impacts and requirements of the Building Regulations, in particular Fire Safety (Part B), Conservation of Fuel and Power (Part L), and Access to and Use of Buildings (Part M).
- The scheme layout should consider passive solar design through good orientation, good insulation and natural ventilation.
- All developments should be designed not to use natural gas to comply with current Government proposals for 2025.
- A construction management plan is recommended as a useful way of demonstrating the process of building the development and any impacts on adjacent housing and adjacent natural resources – e.g. habitats, ecology and the River Beane.
- The following environmental issues should all be considered as part of the design:
 - Air quality;
 - Water consumption and quality;
 - Drainage, attenuation and rainwater harvesting;
 - Sewerage;
 - Noise;
 - Light pollution;
 - Waste;
 - Digital signals; and
 - Contamination.

Lifespan

5.30 These design code principles are key to the sustainable future of Watton-at-Stone village, ensuring that all developments are well built and last the test of time.

Design principles made to last:

- Long term stewardship by landowners, communities and local authorities should be promoted.
- Buildings and landscapes should be robust and easy to maintain.
- New and emerging technologies should be used.
- Designs should allow multi generation living.
- Designs should anticipate the need for changes in buildings and outdoor spaces.
- Places should be designed that function well today, last for the future and are easy to adapt to changing requirements of occupants and other circumstances at any time.
- Buildings should be constructed that are flexible, to accommodate changing needs.
- Buildings and spaces should be designed and materials should be used that can be maintained over time and that will not deteriorate with age.
- Account should be taken of possible future development in the local area.

6. Neighbourhood Plan Policies

Note on Linked References:

Linked references to Policies in this Neighbourhood Plan are highlighted bold, blue, and underlined. References to policies in other plans are not highlighted.

Links to Appendices in this Neighbourhood Plan are highlighted bold and blue.

Housing Development Strategy

Sustainable housing

6.1 Watton-at-Stone Parish Council is committed to meeting the housing requirement as set out in Policy VILL1 of the East Herts District Plan. Under this policy, Watton-at-Stone is categorised as a Group 1 village and needs to increase its housing stock by 10% during the sixteen-year period between 1st April 2017 and 31st March 2033. The requirement figure quoted in the District Plan for Watton-at-Stone is at least 92 homes.

6.2 Watton-at-Stone is one of three Group 1 villages in East Hertfordshire which are inset from the Green Belt. These villages have been encouraged by East Herts District Council to consider accommodating additional development above the 10% requirement in their Neighbourhood Plans, especially where it contributes to wider sustainability objectives and the delivery of community benefits. In the process of preparing the Neighbourhood Plan, the opportunity has been taken to provide for the future growth of the village by exceeding the prescribed 10%, in return for significant community benefits for the village.

6.3 East Herts District Plan Policy VILL1 (III.) accepts that there may be a need for a change to the Green Belt boundary, in order to accommodate an extension of the village to achieve the housing target required in the policy. National policy (the NPPF) has since confirmed that where a need for changes to Green Belt boundaries has been established through strategic policies (in this case, East Herts District Plan Policy VILL1), detailed amendments to those boundaries may be made through non-strategic policies, including neighbourhood plans.

6.4 Paragraph 140 of the NPPF advises that, in order to conclude that exceptional circumstances exist to justify changes to Green Belt boundaries, all other reasonable options for meeting housing need should have been examined fully. This includes making sure that as much use as possible has been made of suitable brownfield sites and under-utilised land and that density of development has been optimised. Both requirements were an integral part of the site assessment process carried out during the preparation of the Plan.

6.5 A number of sites were identified within the village boundary where development was likely to occur. Some of those sites have gained planning permission during the preparation of the Neighbourhood Plan and some of those proposed developments have completed and been occupied since 1st April 2017. Other brownfield sites where development is supported are also identified. All of these contribute towards the 10% growth target and are set out in [**Policy WAS 1**](#).

6.6 At the first village meeting held in 2016, despite a preference for development to be only on brownfield sites, it was accepted by a majority of those villagers attending that it would be necessary to consider further development in Watton-at-Stone. This decision would necessitate an encroachment into the Green Belt that surrounds the village. The question of where this development should be has been the most time-consuming and difficult part of preparing the Plan.

6.7 To inform the work, there were two significant documents in the public domain. Firstly, the EHDC Strategic Land Availability Report published in March 2017 and secondly the East Herts Green Belt Review undertaken by Peter Brett Associates in September 2015. From

these documents, the Steering Group identified a number of potential sites for development within the Neighbourhood Plan Area and decided it would be preferable to obtain an independent evaluation of their suitability for development. The Group applied for, and successfully obtained, a technical support package from Locality who commissioned the review from AECOM. Their Site Assessment report was delivered in March 2018.

6.8 The AECOM report confirmed that of the 21 possible places identified by the Steering Group for development, two sites could be released from the Green Belt which, if restrictions were imposed on them, would be suitable for the required development. The report, which can be downloaded from the [Neighbourhood Plan page of the Parish Council website](#) concluded that it could not determine a preference for one site over the other.

6.9 These sites were discussed with the potential developers at a series of meetings and the results contributed to the design of an overall master plan which is described in Section 5 Development Strategy Masterplan and Design Codes. An outline of the Neighbourhood Plan was first proposed at a public meeting held in May 2019 and then further developed and presented at the final Exhibition held in January 2020.

6.10 The thinking behind the masterplan is that the southern boundary of the village is protected by the Conservation Area, the western boundary is formed by the railway line and no development should be allowed beyond it. The northern and eastern boundaries are less well defined at present and can be improved as a result of the Neighbourhood Plan. Small extensions to the Village Development Boundary are made in the Neighbourhood Plan and the extended Village Development Boundary will follow the amended Green Belt boundary as detailed in WAS 2 Amendment to Village Development Boundary/Green Belt Boundary.

6.11 The eastern approach from Walkern Road looks along an important view across the bypass and the River Beane and enters the village abruptly with houses of a modern design from a side view. The open field alongside the end house (25 Walkern Road) is of limited agricultural value and is constrained by the bypass. This has led to the selection of WAS 3 Housing Site Allocation Walkern Road as a site suitable for development of up to 60 homes. The view across the valley needs to be protected by limiting height of development to no more than 2.5 storeys.

6.12 Development on the northern approach to the village on the Stevenage Road is presently rather stark and can be improved by a well-designed development on site allocation WAS4. The field on the eastern side of the road, Rush Meads, meets the River Beane and is a flood plain. It is an area that would benefit from better management. That part of the field on the western side of the Stevenage Road (known as Malting House Field) which is in the Neighbourhood Plan Area and below the 65 metre contour line, is identified for development in [Policy WAS 4](#). Except for a small parcel of land, the site boundary follows the 65 metre contour line across Malting House Field, to ensure that inappropriate development will not occur on the brow of the hill which should continue to appear rural in the valued views on the entrance to the village from Stevenage and across the river valley. A requirement of the development of WAS 4 would be to incorporate and deliver natural planting to identify the village boundary and to soften the approach from that side. The planting scheme should, moreover, ensure a new and improved gateway into the village, taking the southern entrance to the village as inspiration.

6.13 There should be a defined green space as a focal point for WAS 4 Housing Site Allocation Stevenage Road. Through paths and green corridors should connect to existing woodland. Connectivity should flow to the village and up to the station.

6.14 The Neighbourhood Plan Consultation Event held at the end of November 2016 revealed that most respondents wanted to see new development at an average housing density of 30 dwellings per hectare (DPH) which is comparable to Hazeldell, Great Innings and Motts Close and indicated that the higher density of the Gatekeepers development (50 DPH) should not be repeated. There was a clear view that any new housing development should be in character with the existing village properties, be of traditional brick construction

and have high energy efficiency. The majority of respondents wanted to see a mix of property types (2 to 4 bedrooms, starter homes and bungalows) with a clear preference for a maximum of 2 storeys. Gardens should be provided which would be big enough for families with appropriate landscaping and screening between properties.

WAS 1 Sustainable Housing

I. Sites to accommodate at least 92 homes have been identified, within or adjacent to the village development boundary, to enable the delivery of a sustainable housing strategy in accordance with the East Herts District Plan and manage housing growth tailored to the needs and context of the parish. These homes may be built between 1st April 2017 and 31st March 2033. The target will be achieved through a combination of the following:

- **Completion of 4 dwellings since 1st April 2017 (3/13/1503/FP, 3/15/0719/FUL and 3/16/1227/FUL);**
- **Construction of 3 dwellings with planning permission:**
 - **3/19/2417/FUL 37 Station Road - Erection of 2 dwellings to include, 4 car parking spaces, 2 garden/cycle stores and associated accesses**
 - **3/19/2222/FUL Land adjacent to BT exchange, High Street - Erection of 1, 3 bedroomed dwelling with garage and parking;**
- **Two sites capable of accommodating up to 60 homes each, see the two housing site allocation Policies WAS 3 Walkern Road and WAS 4 Stevenage Road;**
- **Development of Brownfield Sites within the village boundary, identified in Policy WAS 5 para I. (WAS 5a and WAS 5b) will accommodate 17 homes.**

II. The two site allocations WAS 3 and WAS 4 provide for a greater number of homes than required in the District Plan given the encouragement in East Herts District Plan Policy VILL1, to accommodate additional development, especially where it contributes to the delivery of community benefits. These benefits will be sought according to Policy WAS 26 Spending Priorities and may be:

- **in kind;**
- **as a consequence of providing additional footfall;**
- **through Section 106 Agreements or other negotiated benefits.**

Amendment to the village development boundary/Green Belt boundary

6.15 The Amendment to the village development boundary to accommodate the two proposed development sites will follow the amended Green Belt boundary see map showing the boundary amendments and the two development sites is provided in Figure 9. The new boundary reflects existing physical features, where possible, such as roads, the river and the railway line. The western boundary of site WAS 3 will be created with appropriate planting of native species, to form a clearly recognisable and permanent new boundary. The western boundary of site WAS 4 is mapped to align with the parish boundary between Watton-at-Stone and Aston. In both cases, there is currently no physical boundary on the ground. These boundaries will be marked by landscaping, including field boundary trees as a condition of development on both sites.

WAS 2 Amendment to Village Development Boundary/Green Belt Boundary

I. The designated Watton-at-Stone Village Development Boundary separates the village from the Green Belt. East Herts District Plan Policy VILL1 allows a Group 1 village preparing a neighbourhood plan to redraw its boundaries to accommodate additional housing development. Paragraph 140 of the NPPF allows neighbourhood plans to make changes to the Green Belt Boundary established in the strategic policies, where needed. The Green Belt Boundary is amended in order to extend the Village Development Boundary to include the two housing site allocations WAS 3 Walkern Road and WAS 4 Stevenage Road and as detailed on the Policies Map (see [Figure 6](#)).

II. The Village Development Boundary will follow the Green Belt Boundary.



Figure 9 – Village Development Boundary Amendment

6.16 Two sites of similar sizes are identified in the following two policies, to accommodate up to 120 homes. The policies identify specific requirements. Further details are provided in the Design Code in Section 5.

6.17 The two large site allocations, together with homes recently constructed or completed and the brownfield sites that are identified in [Policy WAS 5](#), comprise the preferred growth strategy for the Neighbourhood Plan which was assessed in the Environmental Report prepared by AECOM (2021). The report concluded that significant positive effects are anticipated in relation to population and housing as the growth strategy will meet and exceed strategic growth targets set out in the East Herts District Plan, whilst both large sites remain within walking distance of the High Street. This will help to improve choice and potential affordability of new homes in the village and provide community benefits.

Walkern Road site

6.18 [Policy WAS 3](#) allows for a design of a maximum of 60 houses. In line with the housing needs of the Parish, only the area indicated on the Policies Map as 'Housing

Development Site' should be released from the Green Belt. An area providing public amenity greenspace indicated on the Policies Map as 'WAS3 Greenspace' will remain in the Green Belt providing a buffer between the housing development and the river. This policy provides specific criteria for the development of the site. Criteria in the policies come above the Design Code in order of importance for specific sites.

6.19 The new Green Belt boundary extends the village north up Walkern Road to the A602 and westwards towards the Aston Parish boundary. The new Green Belt boundary then cuts south to the tree belt along the River Beane and south eastwards back toward the village boundary in East Herts District Plan 2011-2033, enclosing the housing on Beane Road.

6.20 Through paths and green corridors are to be provided. Connectivity should flow both to the village centre and up to the station. A new pedestrian/cycle bridge will be required to connect this site to the High Street/Stevenage Road, via a pedestrian/cycle path across the River Beane and the neighbouring field, and from there through Site WAS 4 towards the railway station, contributing to both a circular village footway (see [Policy WAS 10](#)) and the connectivity of Site WAS 3 with sustainable local transport. This feature of the scheme will contribute positive mitigation to the potential increase in traffic resulting from housing growth (AECOM 2021). The development of Site WAS 3 will be linked to the provision of this bridge and path by way of negative condition(s) and/or Section 106 obligation(s).

6.21 The development should be set back from Walkern Road in line with existing buildings. Buildings should be no more than 2 storeys or by exception 2.5 storeys where this aligns with the Design Code (Building Design Section) and be designed and built in accordance with the policies in the Neighbourhood Plan and the Design Code.

6.22 In accordance with the risk-based approach to flood risk in paragraphs 162-167 of the NPPF, any planning application for the site will need to be supported by a site-specific flood risk assessment.



Figure 10 – Masterplan Extract for Walkern Road Site WAS 3



Figure 11 – Walkern Road Site WAS 3

WAS 3 Housing Site Allocation Walkern Road

Development of this site will be supported, provided that it complies with the general design policies, the Watton-at-Stone Design Code, and other policies in this Neighbourhood Plan and meets all the following specific criteria:

- a) Given the site area and the target of 30 units per hectare, this site is suitable for 60 homes.
- b) A physical boundary for the village and Green Belt should be created to form the western edge of the site with appropriate planting of native species, including field boundary trees, to create a clearly recognisable and permanent new boundary.
- c) The frontage and set-back of the development along Walkern Road should follow the line of existing housing to the south. The space between Walkern Road and the housing must be landscaped and not be dominated by parking.
- d) At the entrance of the site on Walkern Road, a scheme to reduce traffic speed is essential. A pedestrian/cyclist crossing point, as part of the circular path, to link to the opposite open green space and a new linking footpath along Walkern Road towards the village centre are also required.
- e) Buildings should not be over 2 storeys in height or 2.5 storeys where this aligns with the Design Code exceptions.
- f) The view on arrival into the village (Protected View 7, see [Policy WAS 18](#)) means that the design must ensure that the new buildings do not break the horizon line (the line formed by the heights of existing buildings) of the village and also that the buildings and landscape add interest in the foreground of the view.
- g) The site lies in an area of Archaeological Significance where District Plan Policy HA3 applies.
- h) A mix of house types should be included, and consideration given to ensuring positive facades are achieved overlooking public and communal space and that the development as a whole is welcoming with a well-proportioned hierarchy of streets and spaces.
- i) An efficient, effective and well-maintained SuDs system should be designed and implemented to ensure no polluting run-off flows into the River Beane and to provide a multi-functional recreational space, with high ecological value, overlooked by the new homes.
- j) The public spaces should have well-designed, implemented and maintained landscaping and tree planting which provide structure, interest and character. Paths and green corridors will connect to existing green areas beyond the development site.
- k) The development must include a connecting footpath that links from the entrance of the site to a new pedestrian/cycle bridge across the River Beane, as part of the wider circular path around the village (see [Policy WAS 10](#)).
- l) In accordance with East Herts District Plan Policy VILL1 III. the Neighbourhood Plan is accommodating additional development to the policy requirement, which will deliver community benefits. Specifically, this development will be linked (by way of negative conditions and/or Section 106 obligations) to a new pedestrian/cycle bridge over the River Beane, across the field to the Stevenage Road to connect with the pedestrian access to Moorymead Close and the railway station provided through site WAS 4 Stevenage Road (see [Policy WAS 10](#)). The new pedestrian/cycle bridge must be designed and constructed to the satisfaction of the Environment Agency.

WAS 3 Housing Site Allocation Walkern Road continued

- m) The Environment Agency's approval of the bridge design must be secured before any development takes place on this site and a management plan to ensure the upkeep for the bridge and pedestrian/cycle path must be agreed before any part of the development is first occupied.
- n) The provision of public amenity greenspace (which will remain in the Green Belt) will provide a buffer between the housing development and the River Beane. The greenspace will include public pedestrian/cycle access over the footbridge that will cross the river and link to the new circular path (see criterion l). The space could also be combined with SuDs to make the best use of land.

Stevenage Road site

6.23 [Policy WAS 4](#) allows for a design of a maximum of 60 houses. In line with the housing needs of the Parish, only the area indicated on the plan should be released from the Green Belt. This policy provides specific criteria for the development of the site. Criteria in the policies come above the Design Code in order of importance for specific sites.

6.24 The new Green Belt boundary extends northwest from the existing village boundary along Stevenage Road until it meets the boundary with Aston Parish. The site allocation cannot go beyond the boundary of the designated Neighbourhood Plan Area. At this point there is no definition on the ground of the Green Belt boundary. The new boundary turns southwest and follows a straight line almost to the corner of the tree belt along the railway line and intersects the 65 metre contour at which point it goes east to the most southerly point of no. 12 Stevenage Road where it meets the old village boundary. Large sections of this new boundary will require a landscaping scheme to create the permanent new village and Green Belt boundary.

6.25 A new pedestrian/cycle path will be required, linking with the path from Site WAS 3 at one end and providing connectivity into Moorymead Close and, from there, to the station. The development of Site WAS 4 will be linked to the provision of this path by way of negative condition(s) and/or Section 106 obligation(s). This path will form part of the new circular village path (see [Policy WAS 10](#)). Houses should front onto the road, in continuity with existing development on the adjoining land.

6.26 In accordance with the risk-based approach to flood risk in paragraphs 162-167 of the NPPF, any planning application for the site will need to be supported by a site-specific flood risk assessment.

6.27 No development should be permitted above the 65 metre contour line except for a small deviation to line up with the existing boundary at the back of Motts Close. This restraint is based on a thorough understanding of the topography of the village, important views and ensuring that the new development is nestled into the village. It will also help to maintain the openness of the countryside. The southern part of this land is on steeply sloping ground, which is very visible (see [Policy WAS 18](#) Protected Views 6 and 7) as the village is entered from the north, from Stevenage or from Walkern. Buildings should be no more than two storeys and be designed and built in accordance with the policies in the Neighbourhood Plan and the Design Code. In addition, a landscape and visual impact study will be required to inform the design of the development, having regard to the impact of development on the character of the village and the openness of the countryside, as identified in the Watton-at-Stone Site Assessment Report (AECOM 2018).



Figure 12 – Masterplan Extract of Stevenage Road Site WAS 4



Figure 13 – Stevenage Road Site WAS 4

WAS 4 Housing Site Allocation Stevenage Road

Development of this site will be supported, provided that it complies with the general design policies, the Watton-at-Stone Design Code and other policies in this Neighbourhood Plan and meets all the following specific criteria:

- a) Given the site area and the target of 30 units per hectare, this site is suitable for 60 homes.
- b) A new physical boundary for the village and Green Belt boundary should be created to form the western edge of the site along the Aston parish boundary and continue until the site boundary meets the village boundary in East Herts District Plan 2011-2033. Appropriate planting of native species to soften the edge of the development should include field boundary trees to create a clearly recognisable new permanent boundary.
- c) The frontage and set-back of the development along Stevenage Road should follow the line of existing housing to the west. The space between Stevenage Road and the housing must be landscaped and not be dominated by parking.
- d) At the entrance of the site on Stevenage Road, a scheme to reduce traffic speed is essential. A pedestrian/cyclist crossing point and a linking footpath along Stevenage Road towards the village centre are also required.
- e) Buildings should not be over two storeys in height and should be built on the flat ground within the site boundary as marked on the Policies Map.
- f) The view on arrival into the village (Protected View 6 and 7, see [Policy WAS 18](#)) means the design must ensure that the new buildings do not break the horizon line of the village (the line formed by the heights of existing buildings) and also the buildings and landscape add interest in the foreground of the view.

WAS 4 Housing Site Allocation Stevenage Road continued

- g) A landscape and visual impact study will be required to inform the design of the development, having regard to the impact of development on the character of the village and the openness of the countryside.
- h) The site lies in an area of Archaeological Significance where District Plan Policy HA3 applies.
- i) A mix of house types should be included and consideration given to ensuring positive facades are achieved overlooking public and communal space and that the development as a whole is welcoming, with a well-proportioned hierarchy of streets and spaces.
- j) An efficient, effective and well-maintained SuDs system should be designed and implemented to ensure no polluting run-off flows into the River Beane and to provide a multi-functional recreational space, with high ecological value, overlooked by the new homes.
- k) The public spaces should have well-designed, implemented and maintained landscaping and tree planting which provide structure, interest and character.
- l) Green corridors should be created through the site to allow access for wildlife.
- m) The development must be linked (by way of negative condition(s) and/or Section 106 obligation(s)) to the provision of a connecting footpath and central communal green space that links from the crossing point on the Stevenage Road (towards the new pedestrian/cycle bridge to be provided under [Policy WAS 3](#)), up to the southernmost part linking to Moorymead Close and from the train station, as part of the wider circular path around the village (see [Policy WAS 10](#)).
- n) The main open space should be combined with SuDs to make the best use of land; link to the new circular path; and be as central to the development as possible.
- o) In accordance with East Herts District Plan Policy VILL1 III. the Neighbourhood Plan is accommodating additional development to the policy requirement, which will deliver community benefits. This development will be linked (by way of negative condition(s) and/or Section 106 obligation(s)) to the provision of land for additional football provision preferably on land on Mill Lane in the same ownership (see [Policy WAS 15](#)) or on a suitably located alternative site.

Development on Brownfield Sites

6.28 Brownfield sites were selected as the most popular option for housing development at each stage of consultation on the Neighbourhood Plan. Although the Neighbourhood Plan cannot meet its strategic housing requirement just on brownfield sites, the priority in defining the growth strategy was to maximise brownfield development. The former Highways Depot on Station Road and the old Doctors Surgery in Great Innings North are identified as brownfield sites in [Policy WAS 5 I](#). A former haulage yard on Perrywood Lane and the former business unit in Mill Lane were described by residents as dilapidated or eyesores which needed redevelopment. These are identified in [Policy WAS 5 II](#).

6.29 **The Station Road depot:** This brownfield plot is appropriate for up to 15 dwellings, to be designed as an infill development to enhance and complement Moorymead Close. Dwellings should be no more than two storeys. A central green space should be included to act as a focal point for the new dwellings and to enhance connection of the plot to the existing dwellings opposite in Moorymead Close.

6.30 **Mill Lane derelict building:** Development of this viable piece of previously developed land in accordance with the design principles of this Plan is supported and

encouraged as the current building is in a state of poor repair. Flexible use of the building would be supported, such as business or community use on the ground floor. Given the history of the plot with a tall mill, and the location of the plot adjacent to the common land area of the Lammas, this could be of a building of exceptional design which would be unique within the village.



Figure 14 – Previously Developed Land (left) and Brownfield site (right)

WAS 5 Brownfield Sites and Previously Developed Land

I. Development of brownfield sites within the village development boundary will be supported, subject to other policies in this plan, as shown on the Policies Map (Figure 6) as follows:

- **WAS 5a: Station Road, former Hertfordshire County Council Depot, to accommodate up to 15 homes**
- **WAS 5b: Great Innings car park to provide up to two homes in addition to improving the remaining part of the overflow car park for Great Innings residents. A parking management plan to improve the safety and parking on street in this location will be required in accordance with the Benefits Project Plan. This will be achieved through a legal agreement to improve visibility at the junction, preventing parking through a carefully designed landscape scheme. The site could also accommodate a communal electric car charging facility.**

II. Two other sites on previously developed land within the Green Belt have been identified as suitable for development in accordance with paragraph 149(g) of the NPPF, where the redevelopment of buildings (excluding temporary buildings) will not have a greater impact on the openness of the Green Belt than the existing buildings or not cause substantial harm to the openness of the Green Belt where that development would contribute to an identified local affordable housing need. These sites are:

- **The Mill, on Mill Lane, for mixed use, including employment, which could include a building of exceptional design in this sensitive location adjacent to The Lammas. This site has been abandoned for some time and a creative response for a prominent building with a potential mix of uses and consideration of the improvement of Mill Lane would be supported.**
- **Perrywood Lane, former haulage yard, for housing. This site could support up to 2 new homes and offers the potential to be contemporary, sustainable and of architectural value given its location on the edge of the village.**

Design

6.31 Through extensive consultation, a summary of what the community wishes to ensure for all future development has emerged, as follows:

- any new housing is in keeping with the surrounding area, presenting favourable vistas, enriching the area, lying low in the Beane Valley and protecting the village's historic character and rural identity;
- development is of high-quality design with a mix of house types suitable for the future needs of the village; and
- new development has a density that balances the sensitive semi-rural setting with the efficient use of land and preservation of high-quality agricultural land.

6.32 Reflecting these desires, the Watton-at-Stone Design Code (see Section 5) aims to provide guidance and set expectations for the design of developments in the village. It is based on the "ten characteristics" of the National Design Guide: Context, Identity, Built Form, Movement, Nature, Public Spaces, Uses, Homes and Buildings, Resources and Lifespan. Throughout the design process these principles, as expressed in the Design Code, should remain the focus of the creative thinking, as discussed in detail in Section 5 above.

WAS 6 Design Code

The design of all development proposals shall be assessed against the Watton-at-Stone Design Code. The Code forms a statutory part of the Neighbourhood Plan and should be used to prepare applications for planning permission in the Parish (see Section 5 [Development Strategy Masterplan and Design Codes](#)).

Local Housing Need

Housing mix

6.33 There have been two influences on identifying local housing need: the responses from the local community through consultation exercises, and information provided on housing need by EHDC's Housing team. Residents expressed a need for homes with 2 to 4 bedrooms, including starter homes and bungalows. However, local knowledge confirms that 1 bed homes, in particular small houses, are also in demand for downsizing.

6.34 The Steering Group was not able to commission a Housing Needs Survey. However, the following information was supplied by EHDC on 10 January 2019. "Currently, there are 20 households on the Housing Needs Register from the village. The Housing Needs Register has the following information for Watton-at-Stone":

All Applicants who have indicated Watton-at-Stone as a preferred location:

- 1 bed – 191
- 2 bed – 126
- 3 bed – 44
- 4 bed – 13

Applicants who have 75+ points on the Housing Needs Register and indicated Watton-at-Stone as a preferred location:

- 1 bed – 75
- 2 bed – 76
- 3 bed – 31
- 4 bed – 11

WAS 7 Housing Mix

I. Housing mix, as regards tenure, types and sizes, should be in accordance with current and future local housing need and housing market assessments. The priority for smaller Affordable Housing for those in housing need, one and two-bedroomed, should be recognised in the housing mix.

II. Affordable housing for sale or First Homes should be provided in accordance with current government guidance or the local policy position set by East Herts Council.

Rural affordable housing

6.35 There is no statutory definition of affordable housing, but Annex 2 of the NPPF defines it as being housing for sale or rent for those whose needs are not met by the market and which complies with a provided list of defined tenures.

6.36 The aim of affordable housing is to provide homes for people on modest incomes, who cannot afford to buy or rent a home on the open market. Affordable housing tenures are typically defined as either social rented, affordable rent (approximately 80% of market rent for an area) or intermediate tenures such as intermediate rent and shared ownership. The tenure of the affordable homes will largely reflect the identified needs of the community. New affordable homes help sustain communities by offering local families, couples and single people the chance to stay living in the place where they have strong connections.

6.37 East Herts District Plan Policy HOU4 allows for rural affordable housing on Rural Exception sites. An exception site is defined as one that would not normally gain planning permission for housing, for example, an agricultural farmstead outside the Village Development Boundary of Watton-at-Stone. Development on such sites should be evidenced by the housing needs in Watton-at-Stone Parish and should remain 'affordable' in perpetuity. Planning applications for rural housing which does not comply with East Herts District Plan Policy HOU4 requirements for a rural exception affordable housing scheme or with [Policy WAS 8](#) in this Neighbourhood Plan will not be supported.

6.38 In order to ensure that rural housing is affordable and specific to the local community, [Policy WAS 8](#) describes who these new homes should be provided for.

WAS 8 Rural Affordable Housing

I. For the purposes of the Watton-at-Stone Neighbourhood Plan, Local Needs Affordable Housing on rural exception sites will be allocated to persons who:

- (a) have been resident in the Parish of Watton-at-Stone for the 12 months immediately preceding the date of application for the affordable housing unit or who have at any time previously resided in the Parish for at least five years, or;**
- (b) have a strong local connection with the Parish of Watton-at-Stone through a close family connection or being employed within the Parish.**

II. If no applicant qualifies under the above criteria, those who are resident in, or have a strong local connection with neighbouring rural parishes will be eligible. In the event that there are no nominations from the rural parishes, then nominations from those in greatest need from any location within the District will be acceptable.

Sustainable, affordable, accessible transport

6.39 It is recognised that the East Herts District Plan and the Hertfordshire County Council's Local Transport Plan already have a number of relevant strategic policies which will not be repeated in this Plan. HCC also have a Planning Obligations Toolkit (2021) which provides guidance on introducing sustainable transport into a development. Policies WAS 9 Sustainable Transport Provision and WAS 10 Proposed New Footpath/Cycle Connections are designed to complement those strategic policies and provide policies relevant to the development strategy in the Neighbourhood Plan and the local issues raised in consultation.

6.40 The Neighbourhood Plan Consultation Event held at the end of November 2016 revealed that the traffic implications of additional development were of concern and should be addressed at the planning stage with improvements to the highway provision, bus and rail services and cycle links to the neighbouring area.

6.41 Concern about mitigating the transport impact of new development has been addressed through the location and design of the future development sites, the provision of a sustainable connectivity strategy and specifying off-site works and services to be delivered as part of the development, either directly or through negative conditions or planning obligations. The connectivity element of the development strategy goes a long way to providing relevant provision for walking and cycling facilities to ensure that the new development is properly integrated into the village and reduces the need to travel by car locally.

6.42 Efforts should be made to work with the local authorities to secure improvements at existing bus stops in the village. If the built-up area of the village extends significantly in length along the direction of an existing or future bus route, a new bus stop should be added for new and existing residents of that part of the village. Any new development should have hard-surface shared pedestrian/cycling paths connecting it to the existing and future network of footpaths through the village, including connection to the train station.

6.43 The Neighbourhood Plan Consultation Event held at the end of November 2016 revealed that parking was by far the biggest issue in the village, and many were concerned that the existing parking and traffic issues had not been solved. Adequate off-street parking was seen as essential.

6.44 The following comments are examples of the responses received:

Village parking: "The village halls should be encouraged to open up access to their car parks for public use whenever they are not needed by renters of that hall in question".

Old Doctor's surgery car park in Great Innings: "This brownfield site is currently used as an overflow car park for residents of Great Innings. Given its limited scope for residential development, the current use should be formalised."

6.45 Vehicle parking problems at the station were also highlighted. Yellow lines were introduced on Station Road, which have gone some way to improving the situation. Due to commuting changes during the pandemic, it is currently unclear what the capacity of the car park will need to be in the long term. Further work should be done to encourage the TOC (Train Operating Company) or Network Rail to investigate how additional capacity can be achieved.

WAS 9 Sustainable Transport Provision

I. Maintaining and developing high quality bus and community transport services should be integral to all new developments and should complement the provision of safe walking and cycling routes. These include well-designed and well-located stopping places for existing residents and to serve the new housing developments, and better facilities at bus stops such as real time information and raised kerbing.

II. Projects for such developments e.g. extending the provision of bus services to new housing, could be funded through Section 106 contributions or other funding mechanisms.

III. All new dwellings shall have charging points for electric vehicles or appropriate electricity infrastructure to facilitate installation of a charging point.



Figure 15 – Public Transport in Watton-at-Stone

WAS 10 Proposed New Footpath/Cycle Connections

The following three route connections for pedestrians/cyclists have been identified during the preparation of the Neighbourhood Plan and would improve connectivity throughout the village. Proposals that would facilitate the delivery of these links will be considered favourably, subject to other policies in this plan. The implementation of these connecting routes could be funded through Section 106 contributions or other funding mechanisms:

- Pedestrian/cycle route to/from the railway station connecting Moorymead Close/Great Innings to Stevenage Road crossing the high part of Malting House Field above WAS 4, through WAS 4, crossing Rush Meads, across the river by a bridge, and through WAS 3 connecting to existing rights of way east of Walkern Road. Where appropriate, this route should be lit for pedestrians and cyclists in a manner that is sensitive to the requirements of nocturnal wildlife.
- Route through the Children's Centre car park to provide a permanent link, available at all times, from Gatekeepers Meadow to Rectory Close linking to the existing public footpath to School Lane
- Link from Gatekeepers Meadow to Church Lane.

Provision of amenities

Consultation feedback

6.46 The responses gathered from the consultation events held in May 2016, November 2016 and January 2020 revealed that respondents were very positive about the range of amenities in the village and acknowledged the strong community spirit that exists.

6.47 A wide range of recreational activities are available within the village and are listed on the [Parish Council website](#). Many of these activities are held at the three halls in the village which are also available for private hire. These include The Nigel Poulton Community Hall, the Memorial Hall and the Methodist Church Hall.

6.48 Eating and drinking services are provided by two local pubs and the Crumbs coffee shop and bakery located at the southern end of the High Street.

6.49 Nevertheless, it was recognised by respondents that there was room for further improvement in sports and play facilities (particularly youth football), medical facilities and school provision.

6.50 Following feedback from the first consultation event, a number of proposals for improved amenities were presented at the consultation event held at the end of November 2016. Many respondents endorsed the proposals and there was a general desire for improved facilities for all age groups. In particular there was agreement that there should be provision for football pitches primarily located on the outskirts of the village. Provision should include specific facilities for youth football and a 3G (Third Generation synthetic surface) playing surface which would reduce the overall number of pitches required but also provide a much-needed training facility.

6.51 In addition, there was very strong support for making improvements to the Scout hut on its existing site. The Scouts' own programme of improvements is supported by the Neighbourhood Plan. Finding ways to improve access to the river and developing a riverside walk was a frequent response.

6.52 A sketch showing a proposal for youth football and the Scout hut is shown below (noting that the ideas represented in the shown in the sketch remain subject to agreement with landowners, planning permission etc).



Figure 16 – Sketch scheme of possible community benefits on Mill Lane

6.53 Further details of the proposals that were consulted on in November 2016 can be seen in the [Consultation Statement](#).

Community Facilities and Amenities

6.54 In accordance with the East Herts District Plan, any release of Green Belt land for development should generate countervailing community benefits. Priority should be given to supporting and enhancing community activities, maintaining and enhancing recreational and other community assets, and supporting local enterprise. Any Section 106 or Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) monies generated by a development should be allocated to the fullest extent possible to projects either physically located within the Parish or which will directly benefit Parish residents of all ages.

6.55 **The Meadow:** The Meadow is a community asset and should not be built on, although a redesign of the land to enable more efficient use of the space to enlarge the car parking area and/or to redesign the play area would be acceptable. These projects would be well suited for Section 106/CIL monies to be spent on.

6.56 **The Scout hut field:** The land on which the Scout hut (and planned replacement building) is located is a community asset and should not be used for any other purpose although activities complementary to its use by the Scout Association would be acceptable.

6.57 **Youth football:** Suitable sites should be identified to provide for youth football facilities for the village. Consideration should be given to identifying a suitable site further from the centre of the village for adult football to move to from its current location on the Meadow. These projects would be well suited for funding by means of either Section 106/CIL monies or specific funding.

6.58 **The Allotments:** The allotments are a community asset and should not be built on, although an extension of Glebe Court for further elderly residential supported living would be supported, provided the requirements of East Herts District Plan Policy CFLR1 VI can be met.

WAS 11 Valued Community Facilities

I. Existing facilities valued by the community are identified on the Policies Map (Figure 6) and listed below:

- 1. George and Dragon public house**
- 2. Budgens supermarket and Post Office**
- 3. Scout hut and land at Mill Lane**
- 4. The Nigel Poulton Community Hall**
- 5. The Memorial Hall (High Street)**
- 6. The Methodist Church**
- 7. Watton Place Clinic**
- 8. The Bull public house**
- 9. St Andrew and St Mary's Church**

Each facility and the reason why they are valued is set out in Appendix C – Valued Community Facilities.

II. Permission for a change of use of these facilities would need to be supported by evidence that the facilities were no-longer used with no likelihood that re-use was possible or desirable, or that their active use was to be replaced elsewhere and would still benefit village residents, in accordance with East Herts District Plan Policy CFLR8. Alternative provision should be provided within walking or cycling distance of the existing facility.



Figure 17 – From left, the George and Dragon, Londis (now Budgens) and the Scout hut

6.59 The village is fortunate to have a doctor's surgery and with the increase of housing expected in the village, it should become more viable. The current building has access issues and so alternative premises with wheelchair access would be welcomed.

WAS 12 Enhanced Community Facilities

Proposals to improve or enhance community facilities will be supported when they improve the range, quality, suitability and accessibility of facilities for residents, and when the benefits of development outweigh any disadvantages. Contributions towards enhanced youth facilities, football facilities and accessible GP services, collected pursuant to East Herts District Plan Policies CFLR1 and CFLR7, will be welcomed to address any shortfall in the existing provision within the Neighbourhood Plan Area which would be exacerbated as a result of the development.

WAS 13 Maintaining and Improving Health Services

The existing doctors' surgery currently operating from Watton Place Clinic, 60 High Street, also provides an enhanced offer which includes a pharmacist and a private dentist. Proposals which secure the retention or enhancement of these health services will be supported. Proposals that result in the loss of the existing facility will not be supported unless it has been clearly shown that the facility is no longer needed in its current form; the loss would be replaced by new provision in a suitable location; or the proposal is for an alternative community facility, the need for which outweighs the loss.

6.60 The school would be an ideal location for the siting of a 3D artificial pitch which could be used by both the school children and, outside of school hours, the youth football teams.

WAS 14 School Site

The school site identified on the Policies Map (Figure 6) will be reserved for any required school expansion, for outdoor activities or additional buildings related to the school or dual use school/community facilities.

6.61 The school provides important services to the village in addition to the education of its children. The school's admission age has been reduced to age 2 to provide both pre-school and nursery classes. In addition, it runs Breakfast, After School and Holiday clubs and therefore has a working day from 7.30 am to 6 pm for 52 weeks of the year. However, it has no option but to use the existing school buildings for these enhanced services, which are not always suitable. The users of these services would benefit from improved sports facilities

including a 3G pitch which would also contribute to improvements to the children's health. A dedicated building, separated from the main school building with suitable facilities, would also enable the sports facilities to be used by the Youth Football club in the evenings and at weekends.

WAS 15 Sports Facilities

Provision of new or improved facilities for football will be supported in accordance with other policies in this plan. One area of the village where it is proposed these facilities, particularly for young people, could be concentrated is the open space adjacent to Mill Lane. An indicative drawing showing how the site could be arranged is shown in [Figure 16](#). Suitably located alternative sites will also be considered.

6.62 It is recognised that sport is a significant factor in the health and wellbeing of the population. The village is fortunate in having popular sports clubs for a number of disciplines which contribute to a healthier population and a greater community spirit. Any development to the village should not detract from these facilities and every opportunity should be used for their enhancement. The village has dedicated tennis courts, cricket and football pitches which are to be protected and improved or extended upon by any developments.

WAS 16 Protected Recreational Open Space

I. The following sites, shown on the Policies Map ([Figure 6](#)) are allocated as Protected Recreational Open Space:

- **PROS1: The Allotments (off School Lane)**
- **PROS2: The Meadow (School Lane)**
- **PROS3: Great Innings Green Space**
- **PROS4: Great Innings Recreation Area**
- **PROS5: Gatekeepers Green Space**

II. Development that would result in the loss of all or part of these spaces will not be permitted unless they are replaced with better facilities which are as accessible to the local community as the current recreational open spaces.



Figure 18 – Example of Protected Recreational Open Space – The Meadow

Natural Environment

Local Green Space Designations

6.63 Watton-at-Stone is a large village set in the Beane Valley. It is surrounded by agricultural land and its boundary includes several green areas. These are of significant value both to residents and visitors who use these areas for recreation, and as a haven for wildlife. They greatly contribute to the village's distinctive character and are fundamental to its rural setting.

6.63 Local Green Spaces are areas which are considered special and are offered protection similar to Green Belt status under the umbrella of the Neighbourhood Plan. The sites must meet the specified criteria laid out in paragraph 102 of the NPPF. The main criteria for determining a Local Green Space are that it should be:

- “a) in reasonably close proximity to the community it serves;
- b) demonstrably special to a local community and holds a particular local significance, for example because of its beauty, historic significance, recreational value (including as a playing field), tranquillity or richness of its wildlife; and
- c) local in character (not an extensive tract of land).”

6.64 Several sites in the Parish are already protected as common land or special ecology sites, as detailed in the Hertfordshire Ecological Network Mapping (see [Appendix B – Ecological Network Mapping](#)) and were therefore not proposed as Local Green Spaces. The assessment of land for Local Green Space status is provided in the Watton-at-Stone Assessment spreadsheet (see [Appendix D – Local Green Space \(LGS\) Spreadsheet](#)). For further details of those sites that are designated as LGS, see [Appendix E – Local Green Space \(LGS\) Descriptions](#). These documents are also available on the [Neighbourhood Plan page of the Parish Council website](#).

WAS 17 Local Green Space

I. Three areas within the Parish, shown on the Policies Map ([Figure 6](#)), have been designated as Local Green Space. These are:

- LGS 1 The Meadow (School Lane)
- LGS 2 Churchyard (St Andrew and St Mary)
- LGS 3 Church Balk (field between churchyard and roundabout)

II. New development will only be allowed in designated Local Green Spaces where it is consistent with the National Planning Policy Framework and East Herts District Plan Policy CFLR2.



Figure 19 – Example of Local Green Space (LGS3)

Protected Views

6.65 Both the natural and historic landscape contribute to the special character of Watton-at-Stone. The protection of special views will help to maintain the aesthetic appeal of the village and its surroundings.

6.66 Protected Views listed in [Policy WAS 18](#) must not be affected by new development. They include all entrances to the village, i.e. Walkern Road, Stevenage Road, from the Hertford roundabout looking up to the church, from the Church Baulk roundabout up the High Street, from Datchworth Road into the village, and views from all surrounding high ground across the village. Views also include sightlines within the existing built-up area of the village, particularly within the conservation area (e.g. along the High Street) and across green spaces within the village (e.g. across the Meadow to the Church).

6.67 Detailed descriptions explaining why each Protected View is special, photographs of each Protected View, and a map showing the approximate width and depth of the views can be found in [Appendix F – Protected Views](#).

WAS 18 Protected Views

I. Eight important views and vistas are identified on the Policies Map ([Figure 6](#)) and listed below:

- V1: From Road Bridge to St Andrew and St Mary Church (south eastern approach)
- V2: From church of St Andrew and St Mary (eastward)
- V3: From Nigel Poulton Community Hall to church of St Andrew and St Mary (southward)
- V4: From Church Lane before the railway bridge (southward)
- V5: From Watton Road railway bridge (north eastward)
- V6: From entrance to village on Stevenage Road (south eastward)
- V7: From far side of Walkern Road bridge (southward)
- V8: From Mill Lane to The Lammas (northward)

II. Development proposals in the Parish that are identified as having an impact on the identified important views should include an assessment of the impact of the development on the key views and vistas, where appropriate.

Wildlife and Biodiversity

6.68 Watton-at-Stone is rich in natural history. Although there are no formally designated statutory sites (for example Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)), Ancient Woodland, which is irreplaceable habitat, is plentiful and the database of the Hertfordshire Environmental Records Centre (HERC) identifies a large number of sites within the Parish. There are also a large number of locally designated Local Wildlife Sites (LWS) both close to the village, between the railway line and the A602 and further afield, throughout the Neighbourhood Plan Area. Those LWS that are close to the village, and perhaps more vulnerable to human intervention, are shown on the Policies Map ([Figure 6](#)).

6.69 The current [Biodiversity Metric](#) is referenced in [Policy WAS 19](#). The Biodiversity Metric is subject to change, particularly in the light of the [Environment Act 2021](#). The Act recommends a net gain in biodiversity of 10%.

6.70 The Hertfordshire Ecological Network Mapping prepared for the Neighbourhood Plan by the Hertfordshire Environmental Records Centre (see [Appendix B – Ecological Network Mapping](#)) gives a unique insight into existing and potential habitat networks. This habitat

inventory helps to provide a strategic approach to ensure efforts to conserve and enhance biodiversity where most benefit can be gained.

WAS 19 Wildlife Sites and Habitat Enhancements

I. Development should conserve and enhance biodiversity and seek to deliver net biodiversity gains of a minimum of 10%, in line with requirements set out in national legislation and guidance (as quantified by the most recent Defra Biodiversity Impact Calculator). Biodiversity mitigation or compensation can be situated onsite or offsite. Offsite compensation should be located within the Neighbourhood Plan Area whenever possible.

Mitigation, compensation and enhancement measures must be definitively stated. All new buildings bordering open space or beneficial habitat should incorporate integrated bat and bird boxes.

II. The nature conservation value of wildlife sites, and other significant habitats including the River Beane, will be protected from any harmful impacts of development, in accordance with their status.

III. In particular, the 36 designated Local Wildlife Sites will be protected and managed. In addition, the fourteen areas of Ancient Woodland identified in the Hertfordshire Environmental Record Centre (HERC) database, will be protected from any harmful impacts of development.

IV. Other areas of the Parish, coloured green on the Hertfordshire Ecological Network Mapping, contain habitats of principal importance for the conservation of biodiversity, as specified in Section 41 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 (NERC Act). Development, which would cause significant harm to these areas, should either be refused, or the mitigation hierarchy applied. If permission is granted for development, conditions or planning obligations that secure appropriate management regimes will be sought. The existing Local Wildlife Sites and habitats listed in Section 41 of the NERC Act within the village envelope are listed on the [Neighbourhood Plan page of the Parish Council website](#).

V. Developments located in areas coloured purple on the HERC Ecological Network Mapping for the Neighbourhood Plan Area must deliver net biodiversity gains and contribute towards enhancing ecological connectivity. A list of the existing habitats coloured purple within the village envelope is available on the [Neighbourhood Plan page of the Parish Council website](#).

VI. Proposals to create new natural areas and wildlife habitats, or to expand or enhance existing provision, will be strongly supported. Proposals to remove unprotected trees during development should be accompanied by a tree survey. Removed trees will be replaced with native species, in suitable locations.

VII. Proposals for a new nature area where biodiversity can be improved, between the River Beane and the High Street/Stevenage Road to the north west of the village (Rush Meads) may be funded by Section 106 contributions from housing development in the village.

6.71 The River Beane runs into the village from the north west, between the two housing site allocations, along the eastern side of the village, and then out into Woodhall Park. The river is closest to WAS 3 and a bridge and cycle/footpath is proposed, from WAS 3 through Rush Meads, through WAS 4 and the high part of Malting House Field above WAS4 to Watton-at-Stone railway station, as part of the circular path (see [Policy WAS 10](#)).

6.72 The river is an important feature in the village and the River Beane Restoration Association assisted with the wording of [Policy WAS 20](#) Green Corridors and the River

Beane. The policy seeks to address over-abstraction locally, ensure public access to the river and protect the river's ecological value. Access to the river to ensure food defence maintenance is also protected.

WAS 20 Green Corridors and the River Beane

I. Green corridors should provide permeability for wildlife and access for people. In accordance with the East Herts Green Infrastructure Plan, the green corridors in the Parish, which provide networks of biodiversity and public access, will be protected from the impact of harmful development, managed and where appropriate, enhanced to create increased public access that is sympathetic to the biodiversity value of the green space.

II. The most significant green corridor is the River Beane corridor. Any development that negatively impacts public access to or the ecological value of the river will be refused. Any development scheme adjacent to the River Beane should be designed with a naturalised buffer zone of at least 10 metres from the top of the bank in order to protect and enhance the conservation value of the watercourse and ensure access for flood defence maintenance.

III. All new developments should comply with water efficiency standards and development management policies which are essential to reduce the impact of slow river flows, caused by over-abstraction of the River Beane.



Figure 20 – River Beane at Watton-at-Stone

Historic Environment

6.73 The Neighbourhood Plan Area is rich in heritage assets and this Neighbourhood Plan is designed to protect this heritage by restricting development to the northern end of the village away from the Conservation Area. Policies WAS 21, WAS 22 and WAS 23 are specifically designed to protect those assets for the enjoyment of future generations of village residents. A brief history of elements of the village is given in the following section.

Architecture

6.74 The greater part of the village now dates from the 20th century although it retains a number of fine (and much under-estimated) examples of 18th and 19th century architecture, from the Almshouses, the Grey House, Watton House, Watton Cottage, Glebe House, Crowbury and The Chestnuts to the smaller cottages in the High Street and the red brick terrace opposite the Pump.

6.75 The Walkern Road Bridge over the River Beane is an interesting industrial monument to the 19th century, being constructed of large Caleb Hitch bricks, although it is now much repaired. The 20th century saw the building of the estates on Beane Road (1946), Glebe

Close (1948), Rectory Lane (1948), Hockerill (1956), Lammas Road and part of the High Street (1960), Great Innings (1964, 1977 and 2000), Rivershill (1966 and 1986), and Hazeldell (1970), as well as some individual houses and bungalows. In 1985, the site of the old school was redeveloped by renovating the old school buildings and adding additional houses in the orchard and playground (Old School Orchard). The Gatekeepers estate, opposite the train station, was developed in 2013.

Archaeology

6.76 Evidence for man's presence in the Parish has been dated by Palaeolithic finds within the village and at the Frogmore gravel pit, and there are traces of a Mesolithic (middle Stone Age) site near the roundabout at the northern end of the A602 by-pass. Roman sites are known in the grounds of Glebe House and in the north west corner of Woodhall Park, where Roman pottery was unearthed in large quantities in 1953 during the excavation of the outfall sewer. Well Wood is thought to have been the site of a fortified settlement, possibly Watton manor itself. In the late 1970s, Chapel Wood was found to be the location of a medieval chapel and hermitage, dating from the late-12th century and yielded a fragment of possibly the earliest example of stained-glass window in Europe.

6.77 A detailed Archaeological Report has kindly been developed specifically for this Neighbourhood Plan and is provided as **Appendix G – Archaeology**.

Churches

6.78 Certainly, since the 13th century and possibly much longer, there has been a church in Watton-at-Stone. The existence of a church in 1086 is recorded in the Domesday Book, but the present register commences in 1560. The current parish church is dedicated to St Andrew and St Mary. It stands on thirteenth century foundations and dates from the early-mid fifteenth century and is built in the Perpendicular style.

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Watton-at-Stone> - cite note-12 A chapel was added to the north side of the church in the late fifteenth century. The building is constructed from flint and is protected by a Grade II* heritage listing. The church was restored in 1851 at a cost of about £7000. The Methodist Church in the High Street was built in 1891.

Infrastructure

6.79 The Roman road from St Albans (via Welwyn and Puckeridge) to Colchester ran through the Parish and the present road between Watton-at-Stone and Datchworth still follows the old route for part of the distance.

6.80 The first plans for a railway line through Watton-at-Stone were made in 1890 as part of a Hitchin–Enfield line. Although this plan was never implemented, the proposed route for the section between Hertford and Stevenage was incorporated into the Enfield–Stevenage link that received parliamentary approval in 1898. This line, the first extension to the London suburban system for over 20 years, was then estimated to cost £1.25M.

6.81 Work actually started in 1906, on the Enfield–Cuffley section, and the first passenger train ran through Watton-at-Stone on 6 February 1920 after being diverted from the main line as a result of an accident at Welwyn.

6.82 After World War II the British Railways Board considered reopening the station in March 1967, but it was not until 1981 that any action was taken. The 06.23 train from Watton-at-Stone to Moorgate on 17 May 1982 was the first train to use Watton-at-Stone station for almost 43 years. The official opening of Watton-at-Stone station took place on Tuesday, 15 June 1982.

6.83 The cost of reopening the station totalled £120,000, but only about £30,000 of this was paid by British Rail. Local authority funds provided £80,000 and the village contributed £8,000: £4,000 by way of a donation from Watton-at-Stone Parish Council funds and £4,000 raised by an appeal to the village and neighbouring parishes.

Manors of Watton-at-Stone

6.84 Parts of Watton-at-Stone, including its chief manor (Watton manor), were held by King Edgar, who ruled England from 959 to 975. He subsequently made Watton manor over to the Abbey of Westminster. Despite the later fragmentation of this land, it is recorded in the Domesday Book that the Abbot himself still held one of the five hides making up this land. The Domesday Book also implies Saxon occupation of the Parish, but the only local evidence of Saxon occupation is a 9th century strap end which was found near Bardolph's Farm. By the year 1200, Watton manor had been inherited by Henry fitz Ailwin, the first Lord Mayor of London.

6.85 Watton-at-Stone's other three manors were Crowborough, Watkins Hall (or Watton Hall) and Woodhall. Only the last of these still exists today as an estate although the names of all the old manors have been preserved in Watkins Hall Farm, Woodhall House, and a private house near the church, named Crowbury in 1898 in honour of the old manor.

WAS 21 Watton-at-Stone Conservation Area and Heritage Assets

I. In accordance with policies at district level and the guidance in the Watton-at-Stone Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan 2014 and subsequent updates, the character or appearance of the Watton-at-Stone Conservation Area and its setting will be preserved and, where possible, enhanced.

II. Proposals for development which have an impact on designated heritage assets in the Parish, should take account of the historic fabric of the asset, its significance and the contribution of its setting to that significance. Proposals should conserve or, where appropriate, enhance the asset or its setting.

Non-designated Heritage Assets

6.86 The Watton-at-Stone Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan 2014 notes that the Conservation Area is of a particularly high environmental quality and notes the significant number of high-quality unlisted buildings that it contains, particularly in the High Street. The War Memorial at the junction of Church Lane and Ware Road is mentioned in the appraisal as a possible candidate for listing, despite its relocation to its current position.

6.87 Non-designated heritage assets are buildings, monuments, sites, places, areas or landscapes identified by plan-making bodies as having a degree of heritage significance meriting consideration in planning decisions, but which do not meet the criteria for designated heritage assets. Through the preparation of the Neighbourhood Plan, a number of such assets have been identified. These are listed in [Policy WAS 22](#) and photographs of each asset can be found in [Appendix H – Non-designated Heritage Assets](#).

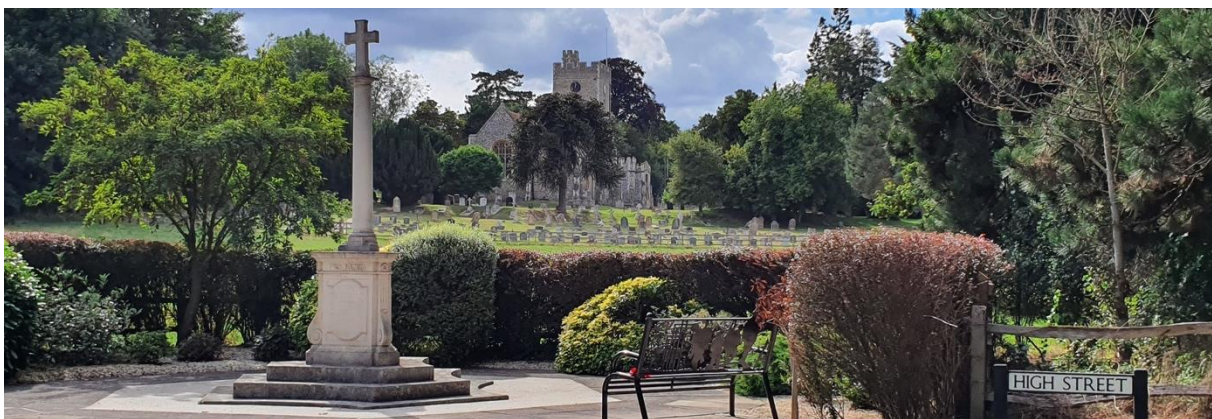


Figure 21 - War Memorial

WAS 22 Non-designated Buildings and Structures

I. Seven non-designated buildings and structures have been identified as having local historic or architectural importance:

- 87/89 High Street (Opposite the George and Dragon)
- 96 High Street (Opposite the Bull)
- Club House, School Lane
- 33, 35, 37 and 39 High Street
- War Memorial at junction of High Street/Church Lane/Ware Road
- Methodist Church and Hall, High Street
- Puddingstone at the front of 1 High Street

II. Development proposals which affect these, and other non-designated heritage assets, including all those unlisted buildings and structures identified as being worthy of protection from demolition, in the Watton-at-Stone Conservation Area Appraisal 2014 and subsequent updates, will take into account the significance of the heritage asset and the contribution of its setting to that significance, to enable a balanced judgement to be made having regard to the scale of any harm or loss and the significance of the heritage asset.

6.88 The archaeological report kindly provided by Sophie Bell (see [Appendix G – Archaeology](#)) shows substantial evidence that the Parish has been inhabited for thousands of years. The village assumed significant importance as a Roman road crossed the River Beane at the south end of the village. It later became an important landmark on the Hertford to Stevenage Road.

6.89 The report notes archaeological finds in the Parish from the early Prehistoric period, through the Anglo-Saxon and Medieval periods to the Post Medieval (1485 – 1799AD) period. A number of listed buildings along the High Street date from the latter period. There are also specific sections of the report relating to the two main housing site allocations [Policy WAS 3](#) Walkern Road and [Policy WAS 4](#) Stevenage Road. The Walkern Road site is considered to have a high potential for finds or features dating to the Bronze Age. The Stevenage Road site has only moderate potential for finds or features throughout history. Further archaeological investigations will be required for both sites.

6.90 Extensive finds within the village and in the surrounding countryside including the Aston Mirror and the concentration of Roman material near Broomhall Farm indicate a rich archaeological past which should be at least recorded and at best preserved *in situ*.

WAS 23 Archaeology

Development proposals which have the potential to impact on heritage assets of archaeological significance, particularly in the vicinity of the Aston Mirror and Broomhall Farm, or proposals which are located in the areas of known archaeological significance should include an evaluation to determine whether conservation is required (for example, preservation *in situ* or redesign) and if further site surveys are necessary. Such important archaeological evidence should at least be recorded and at best be preserved *in situ*.

Support for Businesses

6.91 Watton-at-Stone benefits from a range of shops and services mainly located in the High Street. These include a B Store incorporating a Post Office, a local farming family-owned butchers' shop, a hairdressers and a barbers, a café and artisan bakery, and a plant

nursery. In addition to a Chinese take-away restaurant, both public houses provide both in-house and take-away meals. All of these facilities provide important and well-used services to the community, as well as employment opportunities for its residents.

WAS 24 Preserving Local Employment Opportunities

Proposals to support the retention of existing shops and businesses will be considered favourably provided that they do not conflict with other policies in this plan. Such proposals may include the provision of off-street parking for customers, covered and secure cycle parking facilities for employees and sustainable energy schemes.

6.92 The recent Covid-19 pandemic has strengthened the need to ensure that any development to the village must provide facilities to support and enhance the ability for residents to work from their home environment. Therefore, high-speed broadband capability should be provided to every home.

WAS 25 Encouraging Home Working

Where planning permission is required, proposals which enable homeworking, such as improved digital connectivity, will be supported subject to there being no unacceptable impact on local or residential amenities.

Implementation

6.93 The purpose of the Neighbourhood Plan is to identify and inform development of the village of Watton-at-Stone as required by the East Herts District Plan for 2018 to 2033. The policies in the Neighbourhood Plan will be implemented primarily by EHDC through determination of planning applications within the Neighbourhood Plan Area.

6.94 The success of that implementation and a review of the effectiveness of the planning policies will be carried out by the Watton-at-Stone Parish Council. A review of the Neighbourhood Plan will be considered at such time as legislative changes or other changes in the village impact its effectiveness, or East Herts Council review the District Plan.

6.95 During the consultation process which accompanied the preparation of the Neighbourhood Plan, benefits were identified by residents which they wanted to see happen as a result of its approval. These benefits include schemes which cover more than one of the sites chosen for development and will require planning and funding from and across all major developments. Funding required may also fall outside statutory Section 106 contributions.

6.96 The development strategy in the Neighbourhood Plan provides for more housing than is required by the District Plan. When releasing land in the Green Belt for new homes, in excess of the District Plan requirements, community benefits clearly identified as priorities are vital to ensure support for the Neighbourhood Plan. These benefits are related to the proposed development and where they cannot be provided on site, will be provided in the village. This will ensure that the Neighbourhood Plan fulfils its aims as a plan for Watton-at-Stone. This should not be considered as an extra tax on the developer and should be taken into account in any discussions on Section 106 requirements by East Herts Council and Hertfordshire County Council and/or reflected in appropriate conditions in planning approvals. These are effective mechanisms for ensuring that the Neighbourhood Plan is sustainable at the village scale (See [Policy WAS 26](#) below).

6.97 While generally satisfied with the amenities provided by the village, the residents have expressed clear preference for several specific projects which will significantly contribute to the wellbeing of the residents, including the younger children. One resident made a specific comment about football pitches: "There is significant support for pitches and

facilities for youth football in the village as the existing club has to use a number of locations outside the village. A home for our football is desperately needed and priority should be given for land for a clubhouse and pitches.”

6.98 The projects listed below were identified during the initial consultations conducted in 2016 and 2017. They were subsequently tested as part of the consultation run in January 2020 where the residents of the village were asked to express their opinion. Since the total number of responses received for each spending priority is broadly similar, the percentage of respondents who agreed is a useful comparator and indicators relative priority.

Priority	Agree	Disagree	% Agree	Rank
Circular walk	124	8	93.9	1
Wetland meadow	119	8	93.7	2
Football pitches and facilities	110	17	86.6	3
Out-of-hours school building	101	18	84.9	4
Community Hall Car Park Extension	88	41	68.2	5
Pavement along School Lane	84	41	67.2	6

Table 2 Priority Projects and their support at consultation

6.99 The Community Hall Car Park Extension was refused planning permission and is unlikely to proceed in its current form. In addition, there were many who disagreed with installing a pavement along School Lane.

WAS 26 Spending Priorities

I. In line with East Herts District Plan Policy VILL1 to deliver community benefits especially where the Neighbourhood Plan accommodates additional development, a number of spending priorities have been identified by the community, through the preparation of the Neighbourhood Plan, to improve the lives of people living and working in the Parish. More details of the projects, their relative priorities, and any maintenance requirements are set out in Appendix L – Benefit Project Plan) and available on the [Neighbourhood Plan page of the Parish Council website](#).

These include:

- **Circular walk**
- **Wetland meadow (Rush Meads)**
- **Football pitches and facilities**
- **Out-of-hours school building**

II. The Parish Council will request that these priorities are reflected in Section 106 agreements, where appropriate, and will direct funding received from any New Homes Bonus, Community Infrastructure Levy or other funding streams, towards projects which fall within these priorities.

III. Benefits in kind may also be accrued through negotiation, as a consequence of new development proposals, in accordance with the priorities identified by the community. Community benefits will be sought from the development of housing site allocations WAS 3 and WAS 4 and any future housing development where housing provision exceeds the requirements of the East Herts District Plan. This should be taken into account in any discussions on Section 106 requirements by East Herts Council and Hertfordshire County Council.

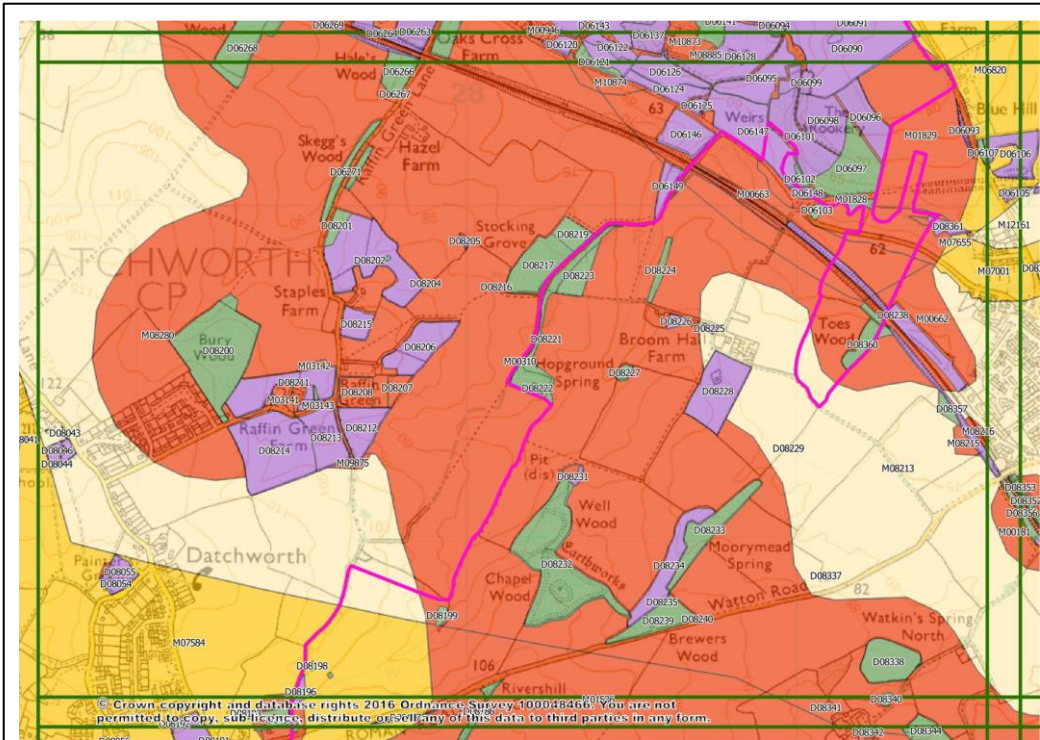
Appendices

Appendix A – Policy Process Map

Obj. no.	Housing Development Strategy	Neighbourhood Plan Policies
1	Deliver a housing growth strategy tailored to the needs and context of Watton-at-Stone to 2033.	WAS 1, WAS 2, WAS 3, WAS 4, WAS 5, WAS 6, WAS 7, WAS 8
2	Ensure that brownfield sites are used for new housing developments where possible.	WAS 5
3	Ensure new housing is in keeping with the surrounding area, lying low in the Beane Valley	WAS 3, WAS 4, WAS 6, and WAS 12 to WAS 23 inclusive
4	Promote high-quality design with a mix of house types suitable for the future needs of the village	WAS 3, WAS 4, WAS 5, WAS 6, WAS 7, WAS 8
5	Ensure housing density balances the sensitive semi-rural setting with the efficient use of land and preservation of high-quality agricultural land	WAS 3, WAS 4, WAS 5, WAS 6
6	Ensure accessibility to bus stops, the school, and village facilities, promoting safe, accessible public streets and spaces	WAS 3, WAS 4, WAS 6, WAS 9, WAS 10
7	Seek to reduce traffic impacts of new development and ensure appropriate parking solutions for it	WAS 3, WAS 4, WAS 6, WAS 9
8	Seek on-going improvements to utility infrastructure and digital connectivity	WAS 6, WAS 9, WAS 25, WAS 26
9	Ensure that development proposals supported in this plan, on the edge of the village, create a new clearly defined Green Belt boundary.	WAS 2, WAS 3, WAS 4, WAS 6
Obj. no.	Sustainable affordable accessible transport	Neighbourhood Plan Policies
10	Encourage the use of, and lobby for better sustainable transport networks including cycle routes, footways and public footpaths	WAS 3, WAS 4, WAS 6, WAS 9, WAS 10, WAS 26
Obj. no.	Community facilities and amenities	Neighbourhood Plan Policies
11	Support the village's key community services and facilities	WAS 11, WAS 12, WAS 13, WAS 14, WAS 15, WAS 24
12	Ensure adequate provision for Parish children to attend the local school	WAS 14, WAS 26
13	Facilitate the development of new football facilities and encourage appropriate use of Green Belt land for sensitively designed outdoor leisure	WAS 4, WAS 15, WAS 16, WAS 26
Obj. no.	Natural and historic environment	Neighbourhood Plan Policies
14	Make the most of Watton-at-Stone's rural aspect and landscape setting, protecting key views	WAS 17, WAS 18
15	Maintain and enhance nature conservation, wildlife and biodiversity	WAS 19, WAS 20
16	Protect the historic fabric, character and rural identity of the village and Parish of Watton-at-Stone, including listed buildings, non-designated heritage assets and the Conservation Area and its setting	WAS 21, WAS 22, WAS 23
Obj. no.	Support for business	Neighbourhood Plan Policies
17	Support appropriate development for local businesses and employment opportunities, including home working	WAS 24, WAS 25

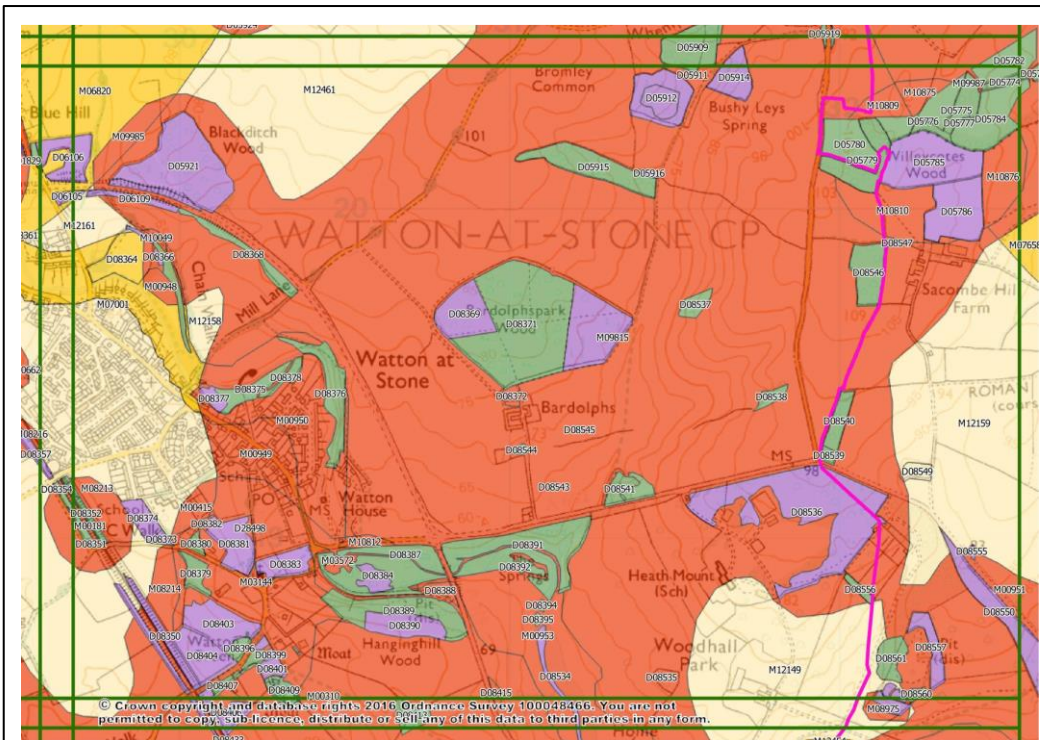
Table 3 Table showing which Neighbourhood Plan Policies achieve the objectives

Appendix B – Ecological Network Mapping



HERC
Herts Environmental
Records Centre

Map 3



HERC
Herts Environmental
Records Centre

Map 4

Appendix C – Valued Community Facilities

WAS 11 Valued Community Facilities

A number of buildings and services have been identified as being of value to the community as they contribute to the health and wellbeing of the villagers. It is important that these are protected in order to ensure their continued availability.

1. George and Dragon Public House

The George and Dragon is known to have existed as a licensed premise since at least 1619 and is formed by an amalgamation of 15th century buildings. The building is an important landmark in a prominent location in the historic High Street and is a major feature of the Conservation Area.

There is a beer garden attached to the pub which is used by families and is particularly popular in the summer. The garden includes a petanque court used by village teams in a local league. It is also adjacent to the village sports field known as The Meadow and provides refreshment facilities for visiting supporters and teams as well as additional parking.

2. Budgens Supermarket

This grocery shop and Post Office is an integral part of the village, providing vital services to all age groups of villagers. The shop is open 7 days per week and provides a wide range of essential products as well as excellent ranges of healthy and good quality local produce. It amply demonstrated its value to the village during the recent pandemic providing all the basic necessities for people who were less able to manage otherwise. During this time, the owners extended the products available and implemented a complimentary delivery service for villagers who could not get to the shop due to shielding.

The Post Office offers banking services and is a collection point for a number of delivery service providers which are particularly useful facilities for villagers who are unable to travel to larger conurbations.

3. Scout Hut and Land at Mill Lane

The children of the village are well served by the active Scout and Guide Group which runs activities for all different age groups supporting Beavers, Rainbows, Cubs, Brownies, Scouts, Guides and Explorers. The headquarters building is in an ideal central village location and is surrounded by open land alongside the River Beane, which enables the Group to provide a range of well-supported activities for the young people. These are vital for the health and wellbeing of the children of the village who otherwise lack suitable services. The building is available for use by other organisations who also provide youth activities and is an ideal venue for larger parties with music.

4. Nigel Poulton Community Hall

This building is located in a central part of the village overlooking the well-used open recreational area known as The Meadow. The building itself comprises a sports hall which is used for such activities as badminton, indoor bowls etc. It has changing rooms and showers for people using the cricket pitch, football pitch and tennis courts. It also has a pavilion area and kitchen, which has been used to hold regular Youth Club sessions and meetings of other local clubs, and also can be hired out for private celebrations. The various sports facilities are in constant use both during the week and at weekends, supporting a variety of village sports clubs and also commercial users which pay hiring charges. The hall is subsidised by the Parish Council.

In addition, the building has a secure meeting room which is used to host the community lending library currently open one day each week and for meetings of various groups including the Parish Council.

5. Village Memorial Hall

This building was built in 1910 by the late Colonel Henry Abel Smith, owner of Woodhall estate at that time. In 1949, Thomas Abel Smith gave the building and freehold ownership of the site to the Trustees of a charity formed specifically to maintain and operate the property for the benefit of the villagers. There are four appointed trustees of the charity, who must be residents of the village. The purpose of the charity is to provide a facility which is to be used “for the purposes of physical and mental training and recreation and social moral and intellectual development ... for the benefit of the inhabitants of the Parish of Watton at Stone”. It represents a permanent memorial of the services of the men and women of Watton-at-Stone in the 1939-45 war and, as such, is an important asset to the village.

The hall contains the largest single meeting room in the village and is used extensively by a variety of groups with many regular bookings including evenings but excluding Sundays which are reserved for ad hoc hires. Examples of regular users are the village dramatic society for their rehearsals and performances, the Parochial Church Council use it for their regular meetings and fund-raising events and various sporting and keep fit organisations.

6. The Methodist Church

The Wesleyan Methodist Church in the High Street was built in 1891 but since has been extended to provide two vestries and additional meeting rooms which are available for hire by the public. The building itself is of interest as it is particularly representative of its type and period and should be considered for becoming formally listed.

The Church holds a service every Sunday. A number of groups use the hall during the week including a Lunch Club for older residents, Card Companions, Knit & Knatter and a Craft Club.

The hall and Church are available for hire for day groups of up to 50 people to run self-led, retreats, quiet days and meetings. In addition, the hall can be hired for children's parties.

7. Watton Place Clinic

This medical centre comprises a General Practitioners surgery, a dental practice and dispensing pharmacy. There are additional treatment rooms used for physiotherapy, osteopathy and chiropodist services. All are much in demand and are well used by the local community.

The GP practice area includes Watton-at-Stone itself together with Benington, Whempstead and Aston. The nearest alternative medical facilities are in the major townships of Hertford, Stevenage and Knebworth. Owing to the limited local transport services, the availability of medical services for the local residents is a vital necessity for both families and older people.

The building itself is one of the oldest in the village dating from the 15th century and it, and an adjoining flint wall, are Grade II* listed.

8. The Bull Public House

Like the George and Dragon, this public house and restaurant is situated in a prominent part of the historic High Street and is a well-known feature and meeting place. It has other interesting buildings on either side and opposite. The earliest part of the building dates back to about 1400 with the majority added later in the 16th Century.

The pub has a well-maintained garden. Although in an older building it is readily accessible for disabled users. The current landlord runs an annual 3-day beer festival over the Whitsun Bank Holiday weekend which features craft beers from both local and national micro-breweries. This event coincides with the annual church fete which is held on a nearby field creating a major and popular event for the whole community. In the summer it occasionally runs live music events featuring local bands.

In addition, outside pub-opening hours, its car park provides additional parking for visitors to the Londis supermarket and other recreational areas.

9. St Andrew's and St Mary's Church

This Anglican church was built early in the 16th Century, and it is known that the North Chapel was added in 1570. It is likely that a church existed on the same site before that time. The presence of a church in the village is recorded in the Domesday Book of 1086 although the actual site is not known. It is known that Roundhead soldiers used the church building to house their Royalist prisoners during the English Civil War. The church contains a number of interesting historic memorials to various families who have owned the Grade 1 listed building, Woodhall Park.

The church is a central part of the village and is well used for weddings and baptisms. Especially well attended are the annual services such as the Christmas Carol services, Remembrance Day and special services around Easter. Links are maintained with the local primary school, with special services held at Christmas and in the summer term for Year 6 Leavers. It also supports a Sunday School for younger children.

Watton-at-Stone Neighbourhood Plan 2017-2033

Appendix D – Local Green Space (LGS) Spreadsheet

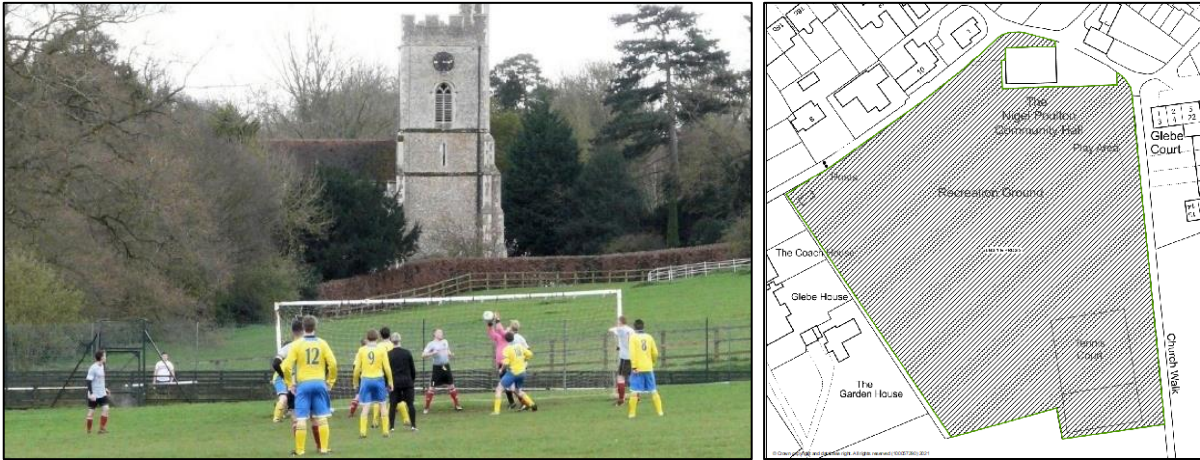
LOCAL GREEN SPACE ASSESSMENT																								
New #	Site description	NP X-ref	Site Information						Critical Criteria				Evidence											
			Potential development site	National designation or right of way	Common land or village green	Private garden	Owner known	Insufficient evidence or criteria	Extant planning permission	Local in character	Extensive tract	Demonstratively special	Reasonably close	Beauty	Intrinsic local character	Historical significance	Recreational	Natural wildlife	Tranquility	Other information	Landowner			
1	Watton Green	N	N	N	Y	N	Y	N	N	N	N	N	Y	Open aspect and protects the view across to the church	Feels like the centre of the village and acts as the village green - downtown Watton	Within conservation area and identified as an 'important open space to be protected'. Designated as an Area of Archaeological Significance (AAS).	Existing use for cricket and football, tennis courts used as a gathering place for picnics and children's play area. School presentations yearly - prizes to children. Dog walking.	Wildlife site Kites and mature Oak trees	Feels peaceful	Public access				
2	Pasture N.W. of Church at Watton at Stone 3.7 Ha - Part of Meadow on Tithe map	Y	N	N	N	N	Y	N	N	N	N	N	Y	Managed for grass species	?	As above	No	Designated as a Local Wildlife Site 45/088 (Pasture N.W. of Church)	No public access	No public access				
3	Cemetery (St Andrew and St Mary)	N	N	N	N	N	Y	N	N	N	N	N	Y	Attractive space veteran tree	Views across it - classic view in Watton at Stone	As above	Is used to walk through - accessible to dog walkers	Designated as a Local Wildlife Site 45/084 (Churchyard)	Very tranquil with little road noise	Public access				
4	Field between cemetery and Founabout 0.77 Ha - Tithe name Church Bank	Y	N	N	N	N	Y	N	N	N	N	N	Y	Gently sloping up towards the church (leads the eye towards the church)	Views across it - classic view in Watton at Stone	As above. Memorial service - walk down from the church through the field.	Village fete annually, horses graze on it. Used as an overflow car park for the church. Footpath to the church.	Hedgerows, Nematodes	Peaceful	Public access				
5	Allotments 1.26 Ha - Tithe name North Field	Y	N	N	N	N	Y	N	N	N	N	N	Y	Ok	Has been only an allotment since 1960's	In conservation area. AAS.	Growing food	Hedgerow, hedgehogs, reptiles, newts	Yes	Possible alternative use/CFIR1				
6	Field between bypass and Watton House 5.7 Ha - Part of Parks on tithe map, now Rye Field	N	N	N	N	N	Y	N	N	N	N	N	Y	Wide swathes of grass and new woodland planting, existing woodland too.	Leads out into the countryside beyond the by-pass. By-pass invisible at this point. Rural nature.	Adjacent to conservation area and AAS.	Well used by walkers, children paddle in the river	Lots of wildlife ... birds, butterflies, dragonflies - to be discussed with Woodhall 23/10/2019 Adjacent to Local Wildlife Site 45/038 (The Grove)	Despite being beside the by-pass there is little road noise across most of the site					
7	South of Mill Lane. Millennium Wood? Needs a new name! Coneyford Hill? on Tithe map	Y	N	N	N	N	Y	N	N	N	N	N	Y	Includes part of millenium wood.		Bombed in blitz - used to be two cottages on the site, not rebuilt because residents died. AAS.	Great for sledging in the winter and well used by walkers. Includes the scout hut and grounds.	Existing S41 NERC Act habitats D08375 & D08378. Includes a pond.	Is this the same as Jubilee Wood?					
8	North of Mill Lane Field between Mill Lane and Lammas. Mill Close on Tithe map - no Badbox Mead	N*	N	N	N	N	Y	N	N	N	N	N	Y	Pleasant		AAS	Well use by walkers and part of circular walk around the village	Tree plantation includes existing S41 NERC Act habitat along boundary with by pass	Some road noise					
9	The Lammas	N	N	N	Y	N	Y	N	N	N	N	N	Y					Opportunity to influence the River Beane Channel						
10	Development site on Walkern Rd - part of Haydon Common on tithe map	N	Y	N	N	N	Y	N	N	N	N	N	Y											
13	South of Stevenage Road. High point of Stevenage Rd site - Malting House Field? on tithe map	N	N	N	N	N	Y	N	N	N	N	N	Y	Highest point in the village, adjacent to the railway and very visible	Forms important entrance to the village - rolls up from the river valley forming the valley side.		Well used for walking	Badger sett within railway embankment. Wildlife corridor to rear of existing properties - To be discussed with Woodhall 23/10/2019	Yes					
15	North of Stevenage Road. Ryan field, Stevenage Rd - Rush Meads on tithe map	Y	N	N	N	N	Y	N	N	N	N	N	Y	Potential for improvement	Important entrance to village and improvement would balance development south side of Stevenage Road			Existing floodplain with potential to become wildflower/wetland site. Western extremity includes existing S41 NERC Act habitat D06103	Quite peaceful	No public access - split by the Aston Parish boundary				
14	Field in corner between Walkern Rd and bypass 2.44 Ha - Great Rolls Mead on tithe map	Y	N	N	N	N	Y	N	N	N	N	N	Y	Partly wooded. Rises up from the village towards the bypass		Northern section in AAS.	Used by walkers and runners	Site has biodiversity value	Some road noise by peaceful					
12	Field along Beane, between Lammas and Walkern Rd - Dear Loves Mead on Tithe map	N*	N	N	N	N	Y	N	N	N	N	N	Y	Young woodland			Used for walking	Cricket Bat Willow plantation with associated wildlife tbc	Yes	No public access				
11	Development site on Stevenage Rd - Gravel Pit Field on Tithe Map	N	Y	N	N	N	Y	N	N	N	N	N	Y											
16	Acton portion of field on Stevenage Rd site	N	N	N	N	N	Y	N	N	N	N	N	Y										Not in Parish	
17		N	N	N	N	N	Y	N	N	N	N	N	Y											

Key
 Already protected outside NP
 Meets criteria for Local Green Space
 Potentially meets criteria
 Doesn't meet LGS criteria or doesn't need designation
 * Indicates where together the spaces = an extensive

Note: Some sites were removed during the Examination. Designated sites are detailed in [Appendix E – Local Green Space \(LGS\) Descriptions](#)

Appendix E – Local Green Space (LGS) Descriptions

LGS 1 The Meadow (School Lane)



The Meadow (in the foreground, see also Figure 18 and V3 in [Appendix F – Protected Views](#)) is the heart of the village. It is centrally located and is within the conservation area. From the Nigel Poulton Community Hall, there are sweeping and picturesque views towards the church and allotments. There are several mature oak trees on The Meadow. While the Meadow is a well-used recreational space which provides a meeting place for sport, picnics and play, it is a peaceful and beautiful part of the village. There is a children’s playground on this site, tennis courts, as well as football and cricket pitches. It has an adjacent small car park.

LGS 2 Churchyard (St Andrew and St Mary)



The churchyard forms a key part of the setting of the village. Part of the conservation area, it is a tranquil space with historical significance and many old memorial stones. It is the green space within which St Andrew and St Mary’s church, a Grade I listed building, is set. It is on a hill and has open views out over the countryside and out over the historic bridge over the River Beane. It is designated as a Local Wildlife Site.

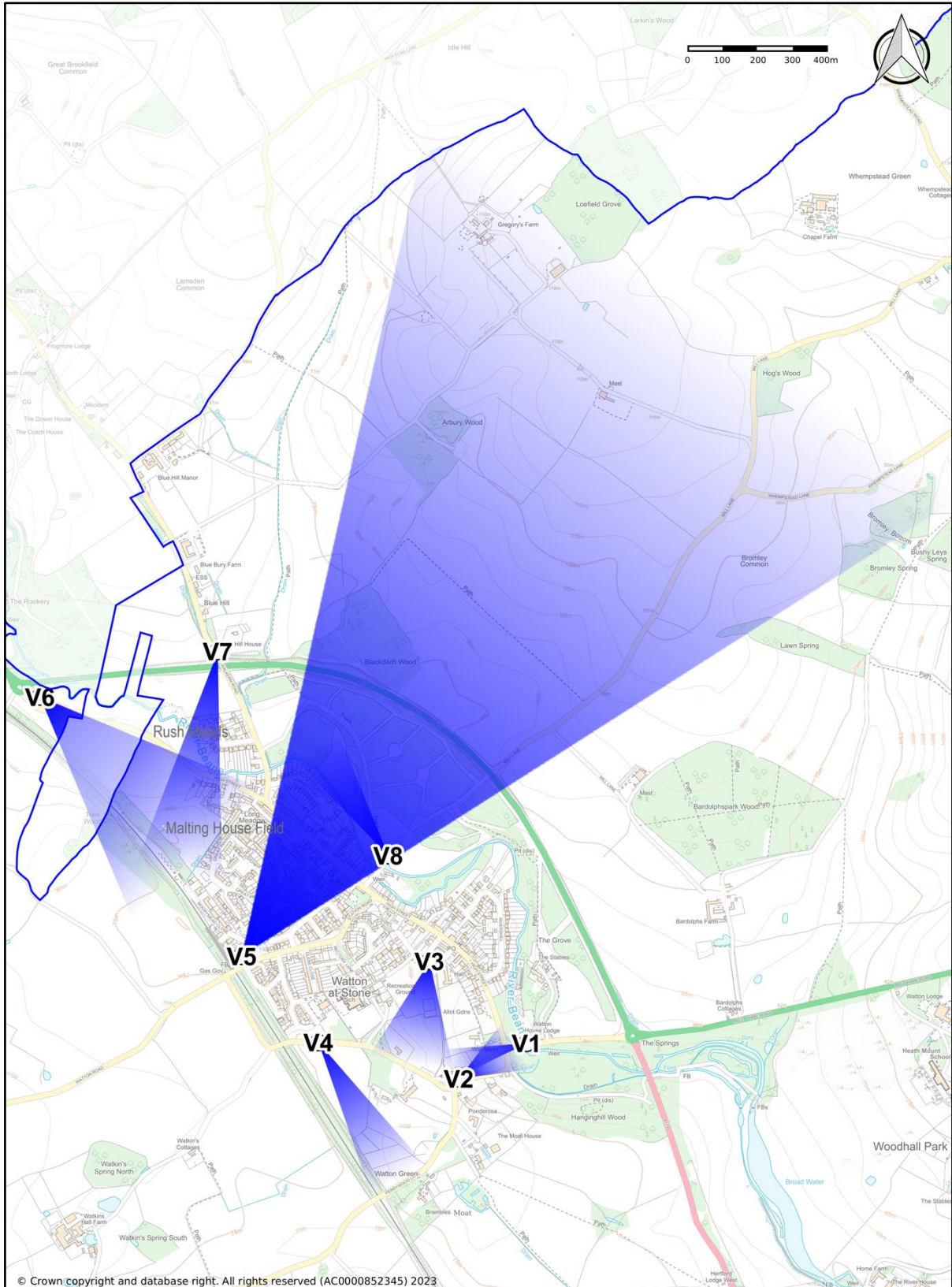
LGS 3 Church Balk (field between churchyard and roundabout)



Looking across this green space is a key view for Watton-at-Stone. The gently sloping site frames the village church and churchyard on the land above it, and the war memorial in one corner of the lower part, in their rural setting. It provides a scenic gateway to the village from the eastern approach and is an important part of the conservation area. It is peaceful, usually grazed by horses and crossed by popular footpaths used by local and visiting walkers. There is an annual fete on this site and churchgoers walk down to the war memorial via Church Balk on Remembrance Day.

Appendix F – Protected Views

The map below shows gives an approximation of the width and depth of each view.



V1 From Road Bridge to St Andrew and St Mary Church (south eastern approach)



This shows the entry to the village from the southern end. It provides a view across the open field (LGS 3) and the churchyard (LGS 2) to the dominant church tower. This historically important building dates from the 15th century, although a church may have stood on the same site before that. The above view is taken from open space opposite the protected area known as Watton Springs and includes the War Memorial.

V2 From St Andrew and St Mary Church east



The reverse of V1 taken from a high point in the churchyard (LGS 2) showing the slope away from the church across the open field (LGS 3) to the approach road to the village (Ware Road) and the attractive old road bridge across the River Beane. The wooded area to the right of the Ware Road is known as Watton Springs and is a Designated Wildlife Site.

V3 From the Nigel Poulton Community Hall to church of St Andrew and St Mary



This recreational area known as The Meadow (LGS 1) is an important open space in the conservation area. The view was taken from a memorial bench alongside the Nigel Poulton Community Hall. It looks across the recreational field space to St Andrew and St Mary Church and the original rectory building now known as Crowbury which built in the mid-19th century. The cricket square situated in the middle of this field has been in the same position for at least 100 years.

V4 From Church Lane on east side of Church Lane railway bridge looking south



This view is taken from the lane which is part of the original roman Road linking Braughing and Welwyn. This arable field was originally diocesan land but is now part of the Woodhall Estate. It is the sole remaining green space and the only safe wildlife corridor in the southern part of the village between the railway and the village buildings. It provides an unobstructed view towards Watton Green, a notable village landmark as it was the medieval site of the village.

V5 From Watton Road railway bridge north eastwards (western approach)



This view is taken from the railway bridge on the only approach road to the village from the west (Datchworth Road, becoming Station Road). It is the highest point on that side of the village and provides a clear view across the Beane Valley to the Whempstead Lane ridge.

V6 From entrance to the village on the Stevenage Road (north western approach)



This view is taken from the side of Stevenage Road and looks towards the northern boundary of Watton-at-Stone, across the open field to the highest point in the village on the high part of Malting House Field above WAS 4. The wooded area to the right is a valuable wildlife corridor which runs alongside the railway line. A well designed development on site allocation WAS 4 can complement the view. Only the part of the view within the Neighbourhood Plan boundary can be protected through this Neighbourhood Plan (being the land in the immediate foreground, the further part of the midground and the rising land in the distance); the nearer part of the mid-ground lying behind the field boundary is in Aston parish.

V7 From entrance to the village on the Walkern road (northern approach)



This view is taken from the side of Walkern Road by the entrance to a dwelling. It is the highest point on the north side of the Beane valley and looks across the north end of the village to the highest point on the other side. It is notable because the houses at that end of the village are concealed by the river valley.

V8 From Mill Lane across Lammas Field looking north



This view is taken from alongside the Mill site on the bridle path known as Mill Lane. This view looks along a public right of way across an important green space in the centre of the village known as the Lammas. The area is of historic and amenity value and is denoted as Common Land under the management of the Parish Council.

Appendix G – Archaeology

The Archaeology of Watton-at-Stone

This report has been researched and prepared by Sophie Bell, an Associate of the Chartered Institute for Archaeology. It will summarise important finds and features recorded in the Hertfordshire Historic Environment Record (HER) and by the Portable Antiquities Scheme. Following on from this, this report will summarise the archaeological potential for the two sites recommended by the Watton-at-Stone Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group.

Early Prehistoric – Palaeolithic (900,000 – 12,000 BC) and Mesolithic (12,000 BC – 4,000 BC)

The Palaeolithic period marks the beginning of hominin activity in Britain. During this time, humans subsisted as hunter-gatherers and travelled around the country in search of food. This, coupled with the small population at the time, results in very little surviving archaeological evidence dating to this period.

No finds dating to this period have been recovered from Watton-at-Stone, but hand axes have been recovered in surrounding areas. Those closest to the village comprise a hand axe recovered 1.03 km north of the Watton-at-Stone bypass (HER Ref: MHT374), a hand axe recovered just to the east of Datchworth (PAS Ref: BH-DCBA63) and a hand axe recovered in Stevenage (PAS Ref: BH-CDDDB13).

In the Mesolithic period, the hunter-gatherer lifestyle prevailed. One flint tranchet adze dating to this period has been recovered just to the south of Broomhall Farm (PAS Ref: BH-C91368).

Generally, the evidence suggests a low level of activity in this area during these periods.

Later Prehistoric – Neolithic (4,000 – 2,500 BC), Bronze Age (2,500 – 800 BC) and Iron Age (800 BC – 43 AD)

In the Neolithic period, the introduction of farming resulted in the end of the nomadic lifestyle and the beginning of permanent settlement.

In Watton-at-Stone, evidence dating to the Neolithic period tends to be concentrated to the south of the village. Most notably, an excavation prior to the construction of the Gatekeeper Meadow estate identified forty substantial pits. Some of these pits contained Neolithic pottery and struck flints. A group of eight postholes associated with a curvilinear cut were also identified. One of these pits was dated to the Neolithic period, the others and the postholes have been broadly dated to the later prehistoric period, though it is likely many of them were Iron Age in date (HER ref: MHT30746). Other evidence dating to this period include a flint recovered from Watton-at-Stone allotments (HER ref: MHT9489) and few flint blade cores and an axe recovered in the field south of the north bypass roundabout (HER ref: MHT6374).

At least thirteen potential barrows, probably dating to the Bronze Age, are visible as ring ditch cropmarks all around Watton-at-Stone (HER Refs: MHT4125, MHT4270, MHT6591, MHT7583, MHT7584, MHT7588, MHT7589, MHT7654, MHT7663, MHT7667, MHT7671, MHT16433 and one currently unrecorded on the HER). A Bronze Age copper-alloy awl has been recovered close to Broomhall Farm (PAS ref: BH-1C3697).

Iron Age activity seems predominantly concentrated to the west of the village. Most notably, a cremation burial associated with the Aston Mirror, now on display in the British Museum, was identified close to Raffin Green (HER Ref: MHT6280, MHT6313). At the time, local press suggested the remains represented "a princess buried with her treasures". The burial and mirror probably dates to the 1st century BC. Nearby, a substantial ditch containing Iron Age material in its lowest fill has also been identified (HER Ref: MHT6309), and two coins are

recorded as being found nearby by the Portable Antiquities Scheme (HER ref: MHT9983, PAS refs: BH-C94852 and BH-E11516). Closer to Broomhall Farm, Late Iron Age to Early Roman ditches have been identified, containing Late Iron Age pottery. A harness fitting has also been found close to Broomhill Farm (PAS ref: BH-DE1662).

Though evidence dating to the Iron Age seems largely concentrated to the west of the village, evidence has also been recovered from other locations within the village. Close to Bardolphs Farm, to the east of the village, cropmarks reveal the presence of a potential occupation site featuring a polygonal enclosure, a smaller internal enclosure and a possible roundhouse, though no below-ground investigation of this feature has taken place so it is not possible to date these features with certainty. Evidence of Iron Age activity was also identified during the construction of the Gatekeeper Meadow estate, as discussed above (HER ref: MHT6374). A copper alloy penannular brooch has also been recovered from Church Lane (PAS ref: DENO-DC9FD4).

Roman (42 – 410 AD)

A large number of finds and features dating to the Roman period have been identified in Watton-at-Stone and the surrounding area. During this period, a Roman Road connecting Verulamium (St Albans) to Camulodunum (Colchester) ran through the village (HER Refs: MHT4615, MHT7664, MHT7665, MHT 10000). Generally, settlement and other activity can be identified close to the route of Roman Roads, and this is the case for Watton-at-Stone. Whilst finds and features have been identified in other locations within the village and the surrounding area, the bulk of evidence dating to this period remains concentrated around the route of the Roman Road, which enters the village just to the south of the Gatekeeper Meadow estate and continues in a straight line through the school grounds, the tennis courts and the allotments before exiting the village to the east of Watton House.

The most significant site dating to this period, 'Roman Site 440yds E of Backlane Wood', is located 1.7km west of the railway line, and c. 700m south of the route of the Roman Road and is a Scheduled Ancient Monument because of its archaeological significance. Debris recovered from the ploughsoil in this area implies that at least two substantial Roman buildings are present in this area. Four test pits and five evaluation trenches were dug in 1977, and no structural evidence was found aside from a possible packed chalk and cob floor, but this does not rule out the possibility of structures nearby. The finds included late Iron Age pottery, Roman pottery from the 1st to 4th century, quernstones, tile, coins, fragments of copper alloy, animal bones and other debris. Just outside of the Scheduled area, a Roman tile kiln has also been identified.

Broomhall Farm and Raffin Green are located c. 600-700m north of the suspected route of the Roman Road. Between Broomhall Farm and Raffin Green, a cremation cemetery was identified and contained twenty urns dating to the first century AD (HER Refs: MHT4724, MHT6590). Closer to Raffin Green, a ditch containing nine late third to early fourth century infant skeletons were identified. Directly below these remains, a coin dating to 273 AD was recovered (HER Ref: MHT6309). A second century Bronze cockerel was recovered from a ditch close to these inhumations (HER Ref: MHT6503). The Portable Antiquities Scheme records 213 finds dating the Roman period which have been recovered in the area surrounding Raffin Green and Broomhall Farm. These include 180 coins, five brooches, five steelyard weights, three furniture fittings, three locks, three mounts, two bracelets, two keys, one bill hook, a bridle bit, a plate, a stud, a weight, a spatula, tweezers, a vessel, a coin blank and one unidentified object. Whilst it is possible that the coins and brooches may be related to other inhumations within the area, some of the other objects suggest that there may also be areas of occupation in the area.

Other finds and features identified close to the Roman Road include a Roman building discovered in the garden of Glebe House (HER Ref: MHT1552), Roman pottery and tiles found near the church roundabout, (HER Ref: MHT1551), Roman tesserae discovered at Bardolphs

Farm (HER Ref: MHT2068), Roman tegula discovered at the Church of St Andrew and St Mary (HER Ref: MHT4360), a floor, post hole and kiln discovered just to the east of Watton House (HER Ref: MHT6554), pottery and coins discovered in a garden at Rivershill (HER Ref: MHT9982), a ditch and a hearth discovered in Watton-at-Stone recreation ground (HER Ref: MHT15573), a possible Roman barrow located half way between Watton-at-Stone and Datchworth, immediately north of the Roman Road (HER Ref: MHT13552), and ditches at Gatekeeper Meadow (HER Ref: MHT30747). Further from the Roman Road, a quern has been identified on Walkern Road (HER Ref: MHT1550), and a Roman bath house has been identified at Hooks Cross (HER Ref: MHT9998).

Anglo-Saxon (410 – 1066 AD) and Medieval (1066 – 1485 AD)

Very few finds and features of Anglo-Saxon date have been identified in Watton-at-Stone. On the site of the Gatekeeper Meadow estate, a curvilinear ditch was identified in 2011. This ditch contained five artefact-rich and burnt deposits containing large sherds of early-mid Saxon pottery, which dated to the sixth to eighth centuries AD. Six probable cremation burials were identified nearby.

A number of charters purporting to date from the tenth to eleventh centuries record the granting of Watton-at-Stone to Westminster Abbey by Kings Edgar and Edward, though these are all later forgeries. The Domesday Book, compiled in 1086, records the population of Watton-at-Stone as 35 households, putting it in the largest 20% of settlements recorded in Domesday. Of particular interest, it mentions three mills and a priest, indicating that there was probably a church here at this time, though its location is unknown.

"Moat Enclosures, Well Wood and Chapel Wood" is located 1.2km west of the village and is a Scheduled Ancient Monument because of its archaeological significance. The chapel was endowed and built by Henry fitz Ailwin, the first Lord Mayor of London, before his death in 1212. An excavation took place here in the 1970s, and fragments of stained glass and moulded window stones were found in the debris. Well Wood is located to the north of Chapel Wood and is scheduled because of a large ditch or moat which has been cut into the chalk. Finds recovered from this site include 13th-15th century pottery and a 12th-13th century Caen stone mortar. Another possible moat has been identified in the wood just to the east of Chapel Wood but is not part of the scheduled monument and has not been investigated for its archaeological potential (HER Ref: MHT2738).

In the Medieval period, the centre of the village would have been focused around the church in the southern end of the village. Though the present church of St Andrew and St Mary dates to the fifteenth century, it is likely that at least one earlier church was located either on the same site or in the immediate vicinity. Moats have been identified nearby on Perrywood Lane (HER Ref: MHT1989), and at Watton Green (HER Ref: MHT1990), and one of these may be the site of the Medieval manor of Crowborough. A moat has also been identified at Watkins Farm (HER Ref: MHT1986). Other Medieval finds and features discovered in the village include pottery (HER Refs: MHT6374, MHT30749 and MHT31129) and cropmarks of probable ridge and furrow (HER Refs: MHT7660 and MHT13466).

Post Medieval (1485 – 1799 AD) and Modern (1800 – Present)

A number of Listed Buildings along the High Street date to the Post Medieval period, including (but not limited to) the Bull Public House, the George and Dragon Public House and the former Waggon and Horses Public House. During this period, occupation in the village would have been centred along the High Street.

The village grew gradually in the Post Medieval and Modern periods until the second half of the twentieth century when widespread development began to take place in the village. This began with Beane Road, Glebe Close and Rectory Lane in the 1940s and Hockerill in the 1950s. Lammas Road, Glebe Court, Rivershill, and the first part of Great Innings were constructed in the 1960s, and Hazeldell and an extension to Great Innings took place in the

1970s. In the 1980s and 1990s, the construction of smaller estates such as Motts Close, The Beaneside, and Moorymead Close took place, and the final phase of the Great Innings development started. Since 2000, development in the village has slowed down considerably, but Long Meadow was built on the site of Watton Service Station in 2001 and Gatekeeper Meadow housing development started opposite the railway station in 2012.

Walkern Road Site (WAS 3)

The Walkern Road Site (see [Policy WAS 3](#)) is located to the north of the village of Watton-at-Stone. It is bounded to the south by residential development, to the west by the River Beane and agricultural land, to the north by the Watton-at-Stone bypass, and to the east by Walkern Road.

The site is considered to have a low archaeological potential for finds or features dating to the Palaeolithic, Mesolithic and Neolithic periods, although stray finds could conceivably be present.

Two HER records are identified within the site. A circular enclosure approximately 24m in diameter is located in the centre of the site and represents the ploughed down remains of a round barrow, probably dating to the Bronze Age (MHT7654). An undated linear ditch, approximately 100m long, is partly superimposed on the ring ditch (MHT7655). Due to the presence of a Bronze Age feature within the site, the site is considered to have a high potential for finds or features dating to the Bronze Age. A low archaeological potential has been identified for evidence dating to the Iron Age.

Whilst no finds or features dating to the Roman period have been identified in close proximity to the site, a high volume of Roman archaeological evidence has been found elsewhere in the village. A low to moderate archaeological potential has been identified for finds or features dating to this period, but in this location it is most likely to comprise evidence associated with agricultural activity. Evidence of occupation is considered unlikely on this site.

A low to moderate archaeological potential has been identified for finds or features relating to Anglo-Saxon, Medieval and Post Medieval agricultural activity. Aside from the construction of the Watton-at-Stone bypass in the late twentieth century, no significant changes took place on or in the immediate vicinity of the site in the Modern period.

It is anticipated that further archaeological investigations will be required on this site.

Stevenage Road Site (WAS 4)

The Stevenage Road site (see [Policy WAS 4](#)) is located to the north west of the village of Watton-at-Stone. It is bounded to the south by the Watton-at-Stone–Stevenage railway line, to the west by agricultural land, to the north by the High Street, and to the east by residential development.

The site has a low archaeological potential for finds or features dating to the Palaeolithic, Mesolithic and Neolithic periods, although stray finds could conceivably be present. The site has a low to moderate archaeological potential for finds or features dating to the Bronze Age and Iron age, most likely comprising of evidence of agricultural activity.

This site is considered likely to have a moderate archaeological potential for finds or features dating to the Roman period. Whilst this is most likely to comprise evidence of land division and drainage associated with agricultural activity, due to the site's proximity to known Roman remains at Broomhall Farm, evidence of occupational or funerary activity could also conceivably be present. The site is considered to have a moderate archaeological potential for evidence relating to agricultural activity and a low potential for evidence of occupation in the Anglo-Saxon, Medieval periods and Post Medieval periods.

Analysis of the historical maps for this site indicate that the site was in agricultural use from the late nineteenth century until the present day. Aside from the construction of the railway line to the south of the site in the early twentieth century, no significant changes have taken place on the site or in its immediate vicinity. A vaguely rectangular enclosure measuring 100m x 45m is recorded within the site (HER Ref: MHT10294). Though the HER records it as an undatable feature, the 1837 Watton-at-Stone Parish Tithe Map shows that there was a gravel pit of the same shape in this location in the early Modern period.

It is anticipated that further archaeological investigations will be required on this site.

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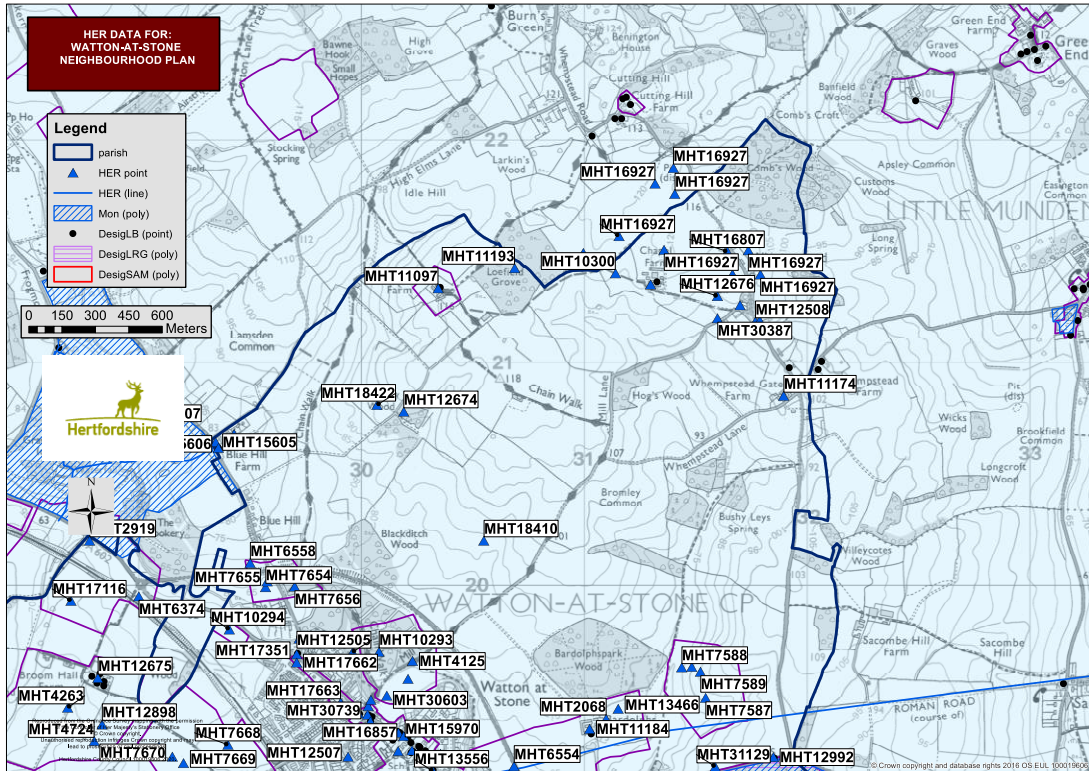
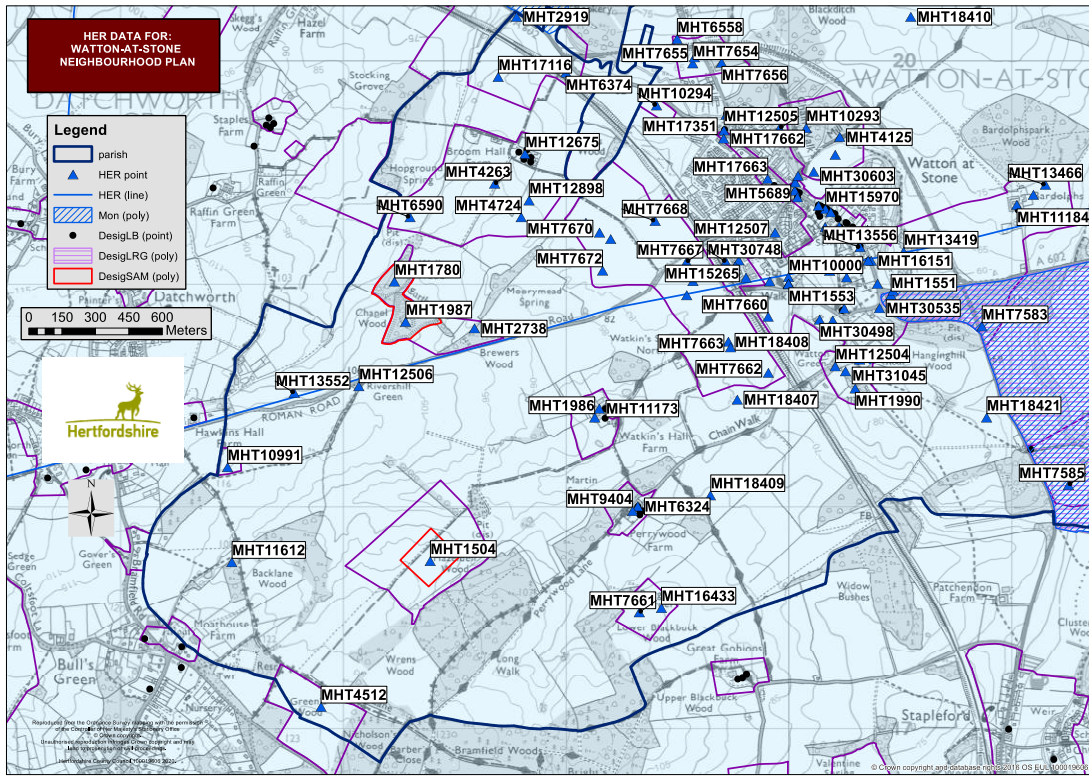
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Appendix H – Non-designated Heritage Assets

87/89 High Street (opposite the George and Dragon)



This is an old timber-framed building which used to be a Hall House. It was built before 1583. It was used at one time as the village police station and the former lock-up is still standing.

96 High Street (opposite the Bull)



This building was once the old Bake House. The ovens are still in place.

Club House School Lane (opposite the Community Hall)



The first school set up in the village was established in 1662 as a free school for up to 20 children. This building, which dates from 1816, was used as the infants' school until 1980 when the site was sold for development. The old school building was renovated and converted to residential use, with additional homes built in the orchard.

33, 35, 37, 39 High Street (opposite the Butcher and Hairdresser shops)



These dwellings are now known as Porch Cottages but were originally known as Railway Cottages. It is thought that these cottages were occupied by railway workers when the railway, station and goods yard were being built.

Methodist Church and Hall, High Street



The Methodist Church in the High Street was built in 1891. It has since been extended to provide two vestries and additional meeting rooms.

Puddingstone (at the front of 1 High Street)



The stone located beside the street name sign at the corner of the former Waggon and Horses public house, now 1 High Street, is believed to be a lump of Hertfordshire puddingstone, a form of natural rock conglomerate. This stone is believed to be the "stone" referred to in the village's name.

War Memorial



The War Memorial commemorates 14 local people who gave their lives in the Great War. It is simple but finely detailed and graceful. Constructed of white Portland stone, the cross is mounted on a graceful tapering column supported by a decorative triangular three step plinth, with the whole structure reaching a height of 4.6m. For details of the commemorative text, see the [Imperial War Museum Memorials](#) register. It is in good condition with all inscriptions legible. The Memorial was recognised as a possible candidate for listing in paragraph 6.38 of the adopted Watton-at-Stone Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan July 2104.

The setting of the War Memorial contributes to its special historic character.

Appendix I – Glossary of Terms

CIL	Community Infrastructure Levy
Blue Infrastructure	Rivers, streams, canals and other water bodies (sometimes included as in Green Infrastructure)
DEFRA	Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs
Designated Area	The area covered by the Neighbourhood Plan i.e. the Parish of Watton-at-Stone
DPH	Dwellings Per Hectare
EHDC	East Hertfordshire District Council
Footway	The pedestrian element of a road, commonly called a pavement
Green Infrastructure	A network of multi-functional green space and other green features
HCC	Hertfordshire County Council
HER	Hertfordshire Historic Environment Record
HERC	Hertfordshire Environmental Records Centre
Local Plan	East Herts District Plan
Locality	Locality is a national membership network supporting local community organisations See www.locality.org.uk
Neighbourhood Plan	Watton-at-Stone Neighbourhood Plan
NERC Act	Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006
NPPF	National Planning Policy Framework July 2021
Rain gardens	Rain gardens are designed in a small depression to benefit from run-off clean rain water.
SBD	Secured by Design, following advice on crime, disorder, fear of crime in the built environment including public open space. Climate change cost of dealing with crime at design stage can reduce the carbon footprint of new homes.
Section 106	Section 106 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990

Appendix J – Acknowledgements

For the beautiful cover illustration – Jane Abbott

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Appendix L – Benefit Project Plan

Note: Benefit Project Plan updates can be found on the [Neighbourhood Plan page of the Parish Council website](#)

Benefit Project	Objective	Timetable	Section 106 Trigger	Delivery	Funding
Football Pitches	To improve the provision for Junior football by providing pitches and limited facilities .	Start works early 2023 (subject to planning permission/ landowner agreement) Completion late 2023	As soon as possible but must be pre-commencement of site WAS 4	Delivered through the Neighbourhood Plan in conjunction with the Stevenage Road development (Policy WAS 4). Dependent on lease of site being agreed	Youth football Sport England
Out-of-hours School building	Building to provide affordable childcare before and after school hours and during holidays.	On hold as facility may not be required	To be decided	Dependent on agreement with HCC and planning permission	In kind or cash provision from developers and other agencies
Community Hall car park and play area	To improve the economic sustainability of the hall by providing 7 additional designated car park spaces and provide improved, updated, safer play area.	On hold as planning permission refused	n/a	Unknown	Parish Council funds external grants or other funding
Conservation area Rush Meads	To extend riverside wildlife area making it accessible with a range of habitats, in partnership with other agencies.	Ongoing	n/a	Landowner declined to liaise with the Parish Council to progress wildlife site	Unknown
Circular walk	To complete a circular walk/cycle path by connecting Moorymead Close/Great Innings to	Bridge installation commencement 2023 (subject to	Prior to occupation of 30 th house of each related site	Delivered by Neighbourhood Plan in conjunction with developments on sites WAS 3 and WAS 4, with enhanced	Designated Section 106 agreement providing a

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	Stevenage Road crossing the high part of Malting House Field above WAS 4, through WAS 4, crossing Rush Meads, across the river by a bridge, and through WAS 3 connecting to existing rights of way east of Walkern Road.	planning permission). Complete Footway/ cycleway works Late 2024.	(WAS 3 and WAS 4)	maintenance plan and part adoption by HCC Highways.	multiuse path of an agreed standard including habitat sensitive lighting.
Provision of new Scout hut	To replace existing Hut to accommodate expanding Scout movement.	To be decided	n/a	Coordinated by Scouts subject to planning consent. Courtesy of the Woodhall Estate.	Parish Council, The Scout Movement, local donations
Footpath	To formalise footpath from Clappers Lane east to Church Lane via Green Space.	On adoption of Neighbourhood Plan 2023	n/a	In agreement with East Herts Council (Landowners)	Section 106
Footpath	To create permanent footpath from Clappers Lane to Glebe Close via HCC Early Learning Centre.	Proposed 2023	Concurrent with Development	In agreement with Hertfordshire County Council (Landowner)	Section 106

Watton at Stone



NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN