

Agenda Item No 8

Executive Board

12 February 2024

Report of the Chief Executive

Water Orton Conservation Area Designation

1 Summary

- 1.1 The report seeks the Board’s support for the designation of an extension to the Conservation Area for the village of Water Orton, and Water Orton Conservation Area Boundary Map, Appraisal and Management Plan be approved for adoption.

<p>Recommendation to the Full Council</p> <p>That Members approve the designation of the extended Water Orton Conservation Area, associated Appraisal and Management Plan.</p>
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2 Consultation

- 2.1 Consultation has taken place with the relevant Members and any comments received will be reported at the meeting.

3 Introduction

- 3.1 Please refer to the following appendices for background information regarding this report:

- Appendix A contains the relevant Appendix of the Water Orton Conservation Area Appraisal (WO CAA) which summarises the history of Water Orton Conservation Area; including its 1983 adoption, subsequent review, followed by re-evaluation and recent consultation.
- Appendix B contains the relevant section of the Appendix within WO CAA which sets out the key legislation pertaining to Conservation Areas.
- Appendix C contains a summary of the most recent consultation responses.
- Appendix D is a boundary plan of the Conservation Area.
- Appendix E is a copy of the updated Appraisal and Management Plan.

- 3.2 The statutory definition of a Conservation Areas is, ‘an area of special architectural or historic interest, the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance’. There is a statutory duty under the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 that requires local planning authorities to consider designating new conservation areas “from time to time” and review current designations.

- 3.3 Conservation Area designation protects the special architectural and historic interest of a place through provision of documentation setting out the area's significance (Conservation Area Appraisal) and proposals for its preservation and enhancement (Management Plan).
- 3.4 Officers request that the Conservation Area Appraisal incorporating the Management Plan be recommended to Full Council for formal adoption with the Boundary Plan that delineates the extent of the Area.

4 Background

- 4.1 The proposal to amend the Water Orton Conservation Area arises from an assessment undertaken in 2022 as part of the Council's obligation to review Conservation Areas from time to time, as set out in section 69(2) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990.
- 4.2 When preparing a proposal concerning the extent of a Conservation Area the Council must follow criteria set out in paragraph 197 of the NPPF which states: 'When considering the designation of conservation areas, local planning authorities should ensure that an area justifies such status because of its special architectural or historic interest, and that the concept of conservation is not devalued through the designation of areas that lack special interest.' This means that the extent of the boundary has to be carefully drawn to focus on what makes the area unique. This usually reflects how and why a place has developed over time and incorporates features that have historic significance and offers an understanding of past times through the existing built environment. Further information regarding the criteria for designation can be found within the WO CAA appendices.
- 4.3 The Council considers that the extended Conservation Area meets this test because it includes notable surviving examples of urban fabric, including historic buildings and street layout, that provide links to important characteristics of the settlement and its development.
- 4.4 The historic environment is extensively recognised for the contribution it makes to our cultural inheritance, economic wellbeing and enhancement to quality of life. Public support for the conservation and enhancement of areas with architectural and historic interest is well established. Such areas provide a familiar and cherished local sense of distinctiveness and contribute to preserving the historic environment which shapes the character of North Warwickshire.
- 4.5 Restrictions and opportunities presented by the designation of a Conservation Area are discussed below in paragraph/section 4.6. However, should it be felt that further protection to identified assets of historical and architectural value be needed then the Heritage and Conservation Officer would recommend that a selection of buildings in Water Orton be considered for Local Listing and discrete characteristics of the settlement within the proposed boundary, be considered **in future** for inclusion in an Article 4 Direction. Where an Article 4 Direction is in effect, a planning application will be required for development that would otherwise have been permitted development, it does not prevent the development to which

it applies, but instead requires that planning permission is first obtained from the Council. Article 4 Directions are used to control works that could threaten the character of an area of acknowledged importance such as a Conservation Area. Local Listing enables the registering of evidence pertaining to the historic and architectural merit of buildings, or other structures, and helps inform decision makers in how to best undertake maintenance or propose changes to the asset. Local Listing should help raise awareness of traditional methods of construction and also protect the built environment from inappropriate works. This is achieved by providing tailored advice to owners of heritage assets and guiding proposals to implement conservation principles as set out by the Government and expert authorities such as Historic England.

4.6 In exercising Conservation Area controls, local planning authorities are required to pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of the Conservation Area. Therefore, within a Conservation Area we have extra controls over the following:

- Demolition: Planning permission is usually needed for demolition or substantial demolition of a building within a Conservation Area,
- Minor developments: In a Conservation Area, you may need planning permission for changes to buildings which would normally be permitted without the necessity to seek consent from the Council first. Changes requiring consent include: cladding a building, making changes to the roof, adding some types of extension, putting up a satellite dish/flue/chimney or solar panels visible from the highway,
- Trees: Anyone proposing to cut down, top or lop a tree in a conservation area, whether or not it is covered by a tree preservation order has to give six weeks notice to the Council,
- Changes of use and commercial uses: some types of changes of use and various works to a non-residential building, including extension and change of use.

5 The proposed Conservation Area boundary

5.1 A plan of the proposed Water Orton Conservation Area can be found in Appendix D.

5.2 The 1983 extent of the Boundary Plan enclosed a smaller area in the north of the village, and has been extended in line with review and reassessment as noted above and in Appendix A. Two sets of public consultation have been undertaken. After review of comments it was agreed that the final amendment was in accordance with the NPPF.

5.3 In the 2024 consultation period 13 comments were received from ten different people. A summary of these comments can be found in Appendix C. Most comments were positive or raised procedural points but one resident submitted objections.

6 The Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan

6.1 Section 71 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 states the duty upon local planning authorities when formulating proposals for the

preservation and enhancement of any parts of their area which are conservation areas. These proposals are contained within the Management Plan. However, the legislation does not obligate the Council to consult members of the public on the actual designation of a conservation area, only the proposals for the preservation and enhancement of it. In this case, North Warwickshire consulted members of the public within the proposed amended boundary in 2022 and 2024 with documents including the extended boundary plan, amended appraisal and a management plan.

- 6.2 On this occasion the Management Plan forms part of the Appraisal document. There is no duration for consultation periods stipulated in legislation. The consultation documents were issued to Water Orton Parish Council and discussed (following circulation) at their full Council meeting on the 25.01.24. Feedback from the discussion was submitted by the Clerk on the morning of the 26.01.24.
- 6.3 Officers considered the draft documents to be largely satisfactory and outcomes from consultation process to have been accommodated within the remit set out in National Policy where appropriate. Small amendments were requested to the Appraisal to aid clarity and now these changes have been incorporated Officers recommend approval of the documents in order to take them for designation.

7 Report Implications

7.1 Legal and Human Rights Implications

7.1.1 The legal process which must be followed when designating or extending a Conservation Area is largely addressed above. The process followed and detailed in the report complies with the relevant provisions. There is no express statutory consultation requirement in relation to the Conservation Area boundary however, there is a legitimate expectation to consult when it is the Council's established practice of doing so. Any consultation process should contain sufficient information to make any proposed amendment clear, explain the effect if the variation is made, and allow a reasonable period for responding.

8.1.2 The decision to proceed with the extension of the Conservation Area will have an impact on the rights of residents affected by the extension as prescribed in the Human Rights Act 1998 and in particular article 8 of the ECHR – the right to respect for private and family life, home and correspondence where the decision must be justified on the basis of public interest.

7.2 Financial Implications

7.2.1 The review of the 1983 designation was undertaken by the Heritage & Conservation Officer and assisted by members of the Forward Planning Team, during standard working hours and within the roles' accepted scope.

7.3 Environment, Climate Change and Health Implications

7.3.1 A wider number of buildings protected from inappropriate development is likely to have environmental and climate change benefits by ensuring that existing

embodied carbon is prioritised over replacement with new structures which require CO2 consumption in their creation, transportation and management. Utilising and improving existing buildings is intrinsically a sustainable policy of action. Furthermore, extension of the conservation area and resultant protection of trees is likely to have environmental and climate change benefits.

7.4 Human Resources Implications

7.4.1 The Heritage & Conservation Officer has been assisted during the process by members of the Forward Planning Team. Advice for owners of properties affected is available on the Council's website and is being updated regularly to reflect best practise and user needs.

7.5 Risk Implications

7.5.1 Subject to following the legal process as referred to above, there is minimal risk to the Borough Council in supporting the proposed Conservation Area Boundary, Appraisal and Management Plan. The requirement upon owners of the buildings within a Conservation Area is limited to their requirement to submit a planning application for development set out in paragraph 4.6.

The Contact Officer for this report is Jennifer Leadbetter (719475).

Background Papers

Background Paper No	Author	Nature of Background Paper	Date

APPENDIX A

EXECUTIVE BOARD: 12.02.24

DESIGNATION PROCESS AND TIMELINE

- Water Orton Conservation Area first designated: June 1983.
- Review of Conservation Area: 2022
- Extension to 1983 designation public consultation: 16.06.22 to 27.07.22
- Review of feedback and reassessment of boundary, appraisal and management plan: January 2023
- Planning and Development Committee consider amended extension: 06.02.23
- Draft consultation documents prepared: 2023
- Councillor feedback on draft consultation documents: 15.12.23
- Public consultation on amended extension to Water Orton Conservation Area: 05.01.24 to 26.01.24
- Executive Board consideration: 12.02.24
- Possible Full Council consideration: 21.02.24

APPENDIX B

EXECUTIVE BOARD: 12.02.24

KEY LEGISLATION PERTAINING TO CONSERVATION AREAS

National legislation

The Civic Amenities Act, 1967 introduced legislation that recognises buildings and areas of historic interest and as such made provisions for the protection of that special interest.

In more recent years the Act has been incorporated into the Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Areas) Act, 1990, which specifically makes the provisions for the designation of “areas of special architectural or historic interest, the character and appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance”

Section 71 of the 1990 Act places a duty on local authorities to “formulate and publish proposals for the preservation and enhancement of any parts of their area which are conservation areas”.

National policy

The desire to preserve and enhance the significance of conservation areas is likewise reflected in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).

Amongst other things the NPPF also requires local authorities to look for opportunities to enhance or better reveal their significance [paragraph 212] and to recognise that historic assets are an irreplaceable resource that should be conserved in a manner appropriate to their significance so that future generations are able to appreciate them too [paragraph 195].

The contribution of the historic environment to place making is further recognised in the Government’s supplementary National Design Guide where it directs new development to be *responsive to local history, culture and heritage* [paragraph 39].

Local policy

The North Warwickshire Local Plan (adopted 2021) sets out the Authority’s policy position on the importance of the historic environment.

The Authority aims to preserve and where possible enhance the character or appearance of Conservation Areas by the prevention of harmful development under Local Plan Policy LP15.

It is recognised in the Local Plan that Conservation Area Appraisals support applicants in preparing development proposals that contain sufficient information to demonstrate how a proposal would contribute to the conservation and enhancement of the Conservation Area.

APPENDIX C

EXECUTIVE BOARD: 12.02.24

SUMMARY OF 2024 CONSULTATION

13 Comments from 10 individuals.

Comprising:

- 4 residents – 3 support /1 objection
- 4 internal comments from 2 individuals – missing links and contact updates
- Cllr Reilly – support
- Water Orton Heritage and Culture Group – support
- Stakeholder (Carter Jonas) – no objection in principle
- Parish Council – no comments

Generally feedback has been very positive however a resident did raise objections summarised as: Extensive comments picking up issues with both the distributed leaflet and the consultation document. They also note that they were not previously notified of the 2022 consultation. They do not support the expansion of the CA and believe 21 days for feedback is too short. They state there is no address to submit written comments and the leaflet has insufficient or incorrect information on it to make an informed decision. Comments on the consultation document are extensive and are noted on a paragraph by paragraph basis. General queries are regarding the procedure of the proposed expansion including financial implications. Many comments on grammar. Some misspelling mentioned and non-working links. Issue found with omitted appendices. Questioned benefits of Conservation Areas - particularly with reference to link given to London School of Economics findings.

Response from Officer:

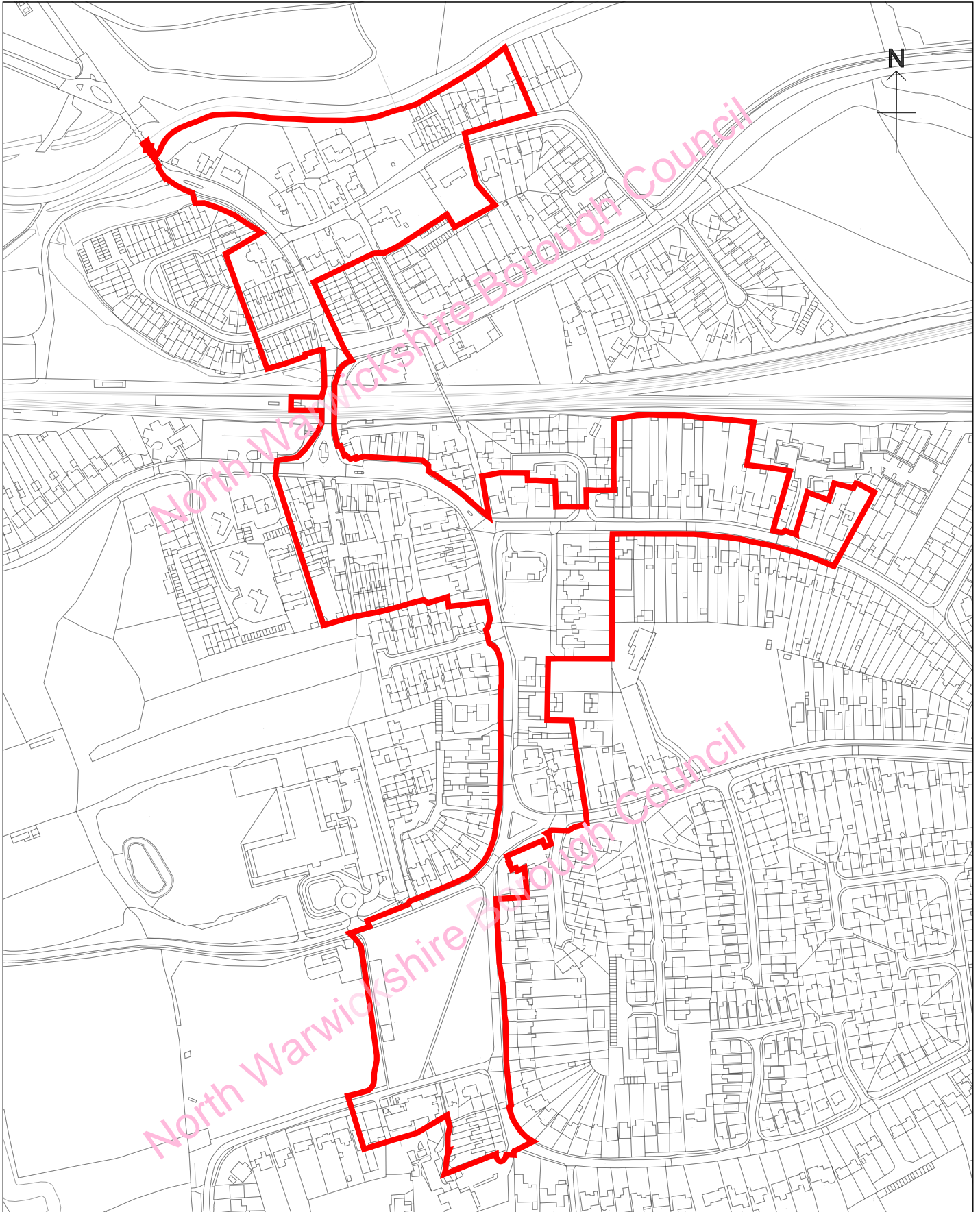
The author is grateful for the time the objector has taken to bring genuine errors to our attention. Furthermore some points will lead to more investigation which will enhance future assessments while other points are outside of the scope of the consultation document. Below is a shortened summary of main points and replies indicating the position taken towards them. This is not exhaustive and if the full objection is required please inform the Heritage and Conservation Officer on 01827 179 475

- It is acknowledged that a misspelling on the leaflet was not picked up till the morning of distribution but it was felt that to delay the consultation for the mistake would lead to an unacceptable time delay and also a waste of resources in the reprinting of the leaflets – it was agreed that if contacted in relation to the spelling mistake then an apology would be made.
- Several points were made that are outside the scope of the consultation document referring to a development in the village.
- Many instances of grammatical errors were noted and some errors in spelling. I can only apologise for my grammatical or spelling errors, I have taken some considerable time to proof the consultation document but inevitably human error occurs.

- The point regarding the consultation period is covered within the body of the report – there is no specification for consultation duration advised within the legislation and as this was a second round of consultation it was considered that sufficient time was given for a person to contact the department for further information should clarification be required.
- It was noted that no address was given for written comments, however a direct number was provided to allow people to make enquiries for additional information, such as an address, if needed. Leaflets were distributed to each property within the amended extended conservation area and also several left at Water Orton Library.
- A question was raised as to why the objector had not been previously notified in 2022 of the proposed extension but in this case, the objector's residence had not been included in the previous extension proposal, however after review of the boundary in 2023 it was included, hence the consultation in 2024 only.
- Several questions were raised regarding the costs of creating or amending the conservation area and its ongoing cost. The report outlines the legislative duty upon the local planning authority to review their areas regularly for areas of architectural and historic interest and designate accordingly, therefore cost implications cannot be deemed a restrictive factor in the consideration of promoting heritage in the Borough.
- Reference to London School of Economics findings (as quoted in Historic England's guidance on the designation of conservation areas) was questioned and stated to be misleading. This reference source is widely presented in support of heritage designations and although research focuses on an area not including Water Orton, it still has relevance in Historic England's view (and therefore the Government's view). I believe we are not in a position to disagree with the findings in the referenced report especially as most feedback from residents in North Warwickshire is that they would like to see heritage assets and historic environments supported (see any neighbourhood plan) and evidence of detrimental impacts on the value of houses has not been made available as far as the author is aware.
- Impact upon the value of property was raised and questions regarding the ability to sell their property subsequent to being included within a conservation area – also questions if the Council will guarantee an increase in value or pay towards additional costs arising from extra work due to the responsibilities on residents in a conservation area. This is outside the scope of the consultation document. Updated evidence from Historic England regarding property value and benefits of inclusion within a conservation area will be sought as a result of these points. Additional planning applications are not required as a result of inclusion in a Conservation Area, however, inclusion does increase the onus on property owners to ensure that proposals enhance or preserve the identified character of the conservation area – no cost implication is made on owners as a result of inclusion. Extra costs for workmanship and materials is relevant regardless of inclusion in the Conservation Area.

Amendments to the document have been made where comments have been made on grammatical errors or mistakes in spelling, but assessment of comments which are found to fall outside of the aims of the document have been discounted. General misunderstandings and responses to comments will be forwarded to the objector in due course.

New Conservation Area Boundary Water Orton



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Conservation Area Boundary

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North Warwickshire
Borough Council



WATER ORTON CONSERVATION AREA APPRAISAL AND MANAGEMENT PLAN

NORTH WARWICKSHIRE BOROUGH COUNCIL





Document prepared by North Warwickshire Borough Council

January 2024

Initial document FW/DB

Updates JL

Proofed AL

Adopted TBC

NORTH WARWICKSHIRE BOROUGH COUNCIL

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SECTION 1



SUMMARY

1.1 Purpose of this document

- This document will help residents, investors and decision makers better understand the unique character of Water Orton and therefore ensure future development is considerate of the character and appearance of the Conservation Area.
- It is not intended to detail the history of the village or the surrounding areas but instead bring together key information about the settlement, including its history, location, development, architecture, layout and green spaces.
- The following document firstly discusses what a Conservation Area is, describes the Area proposed and then through character analysis highlight the special interest of the area. This is followed by a Management Plan.

1.2 Defining Characteristics of historic Water Orton

- Historical road layouts still form major routes around the village.
- Medieval settlement in the north of the village close to ancient river crossing.
- Later development responded to the introduction of the railway line in 1842 and again during expansion in 1908.
- The building material palette is mainly one of red brick and plain clay roof tiles. However, there are also good examples of timber framed houses and rendered buildings.
- Green spaces around key buildings and historic buildings often indicate status and contain important community focused activities.
- Rural character enhanced by mature trees and scale of green spaces.

See more detailed information in section 4

1.3 Conservation Area implications

Designation of an area also introduces some restrictions on what you can and cannot do without planning permission, including:

- Demolition of any building within the Conservation Area
- Control over partial demolition
- Control over works to trees
- Changes to permitted development rights
- Limitations on the type of advertisements that do not require consent

The Council also has the option to introduce Article 4 directions to further restrict specific permitted development rights should it be deemed necessary to protect specific features or characteristics of the settlement.

See more detailed information in section 2

WHAT IS A CONSERVATION AREA?

1.4 Policy and Legislation

The first steps to recognise areas of historic interest resulted in The Civic Amenities Act, 1967 and was followed by the Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Areas) Act, 1990, which specifically made provisions for the designation of “**areas of special architectural or historic interest, the character and appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance**”

The 1990 Act places a duty on local authorities “from time to time” to review any parts or any further parts of their area, for consideration to be designated as conservation areas and then “formulate and publish proposals for the preservation and enhancement of any parts of their area which are conservation areas.”

See more detailed information in Appendix A.

1.5 Why extend the area of designation?

When meeting the requirements of the Act in reviewing the extent of Conservation Areas in the Borough, it was acknowledged that there is great public support for sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets in Water Orton.

Further assessment of the village and feedback from residents has secured the opportunity to extend the former coverage of the designation to include further important buildings and green spaces.

See more information about the timeline for this designation in Appendix G.

1.6 How is a Conservation Area managed?

Methods of shaping development in a Conservation Area to preserve or enhance it include:

- **restrictions** (outlined above and detailed in section 2).
- **guidance** in the Conservation Area Appraisal looking at key characteristics of the village that may be used as good examples of local distinctiveness.
- **Management Plan** that sits alongside the Appraisal and steers proposals to preserve or enhance the character and appearance of the area by identifying buildings or features that may have a positive or negative impact on the area and highlight potential improvements or opportunities.

See section 7 for the full Management Plan.

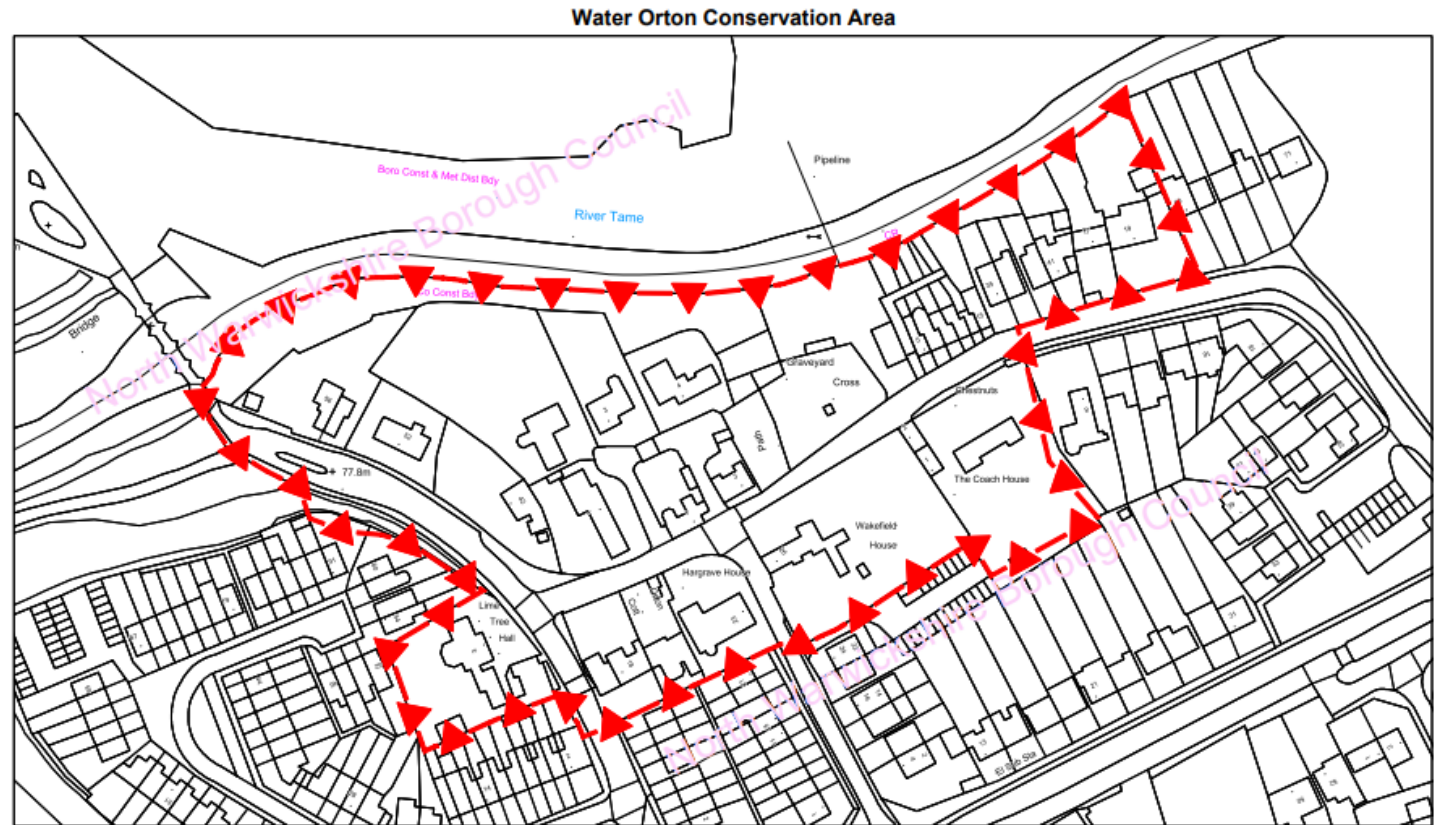
THE CONSERVATION AREA – 1983 DESIGNATION

1.7 Historic Conservation Area

Originally designated in July 1983, the area covers the oldest remaining part of the village and the original site of the medieval settlement of Overton.

The designation of this part of Water Orton recognised these historic associations and the attractiveness of this remaining group of older properties in the village. The boundary of the area was drawn to reflect these characteristics.

The extended Conservation Area will incorporate the original designation and this document includes assessments of the area taken from the 1983 Appraisal.



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THE CONSERVATION AREA – 2024 DESIGNATION

1.8 Extended Conservation Area

The extension to the 1983 Conservation Area contains key buildings and green spaces, **aligning** with government guidance¹ which requires an area merit designation because of its special architectural or historic interest. This ensures the concept of conservation is not devalued through the designation of areas that lack special interest.

The extended Conservation Area incorporates the medieval heart of the settlement and extends to include areas that best show the significant stages of development since the introduction of the railway through the area.

A larger scale plan can be found in Appendix B

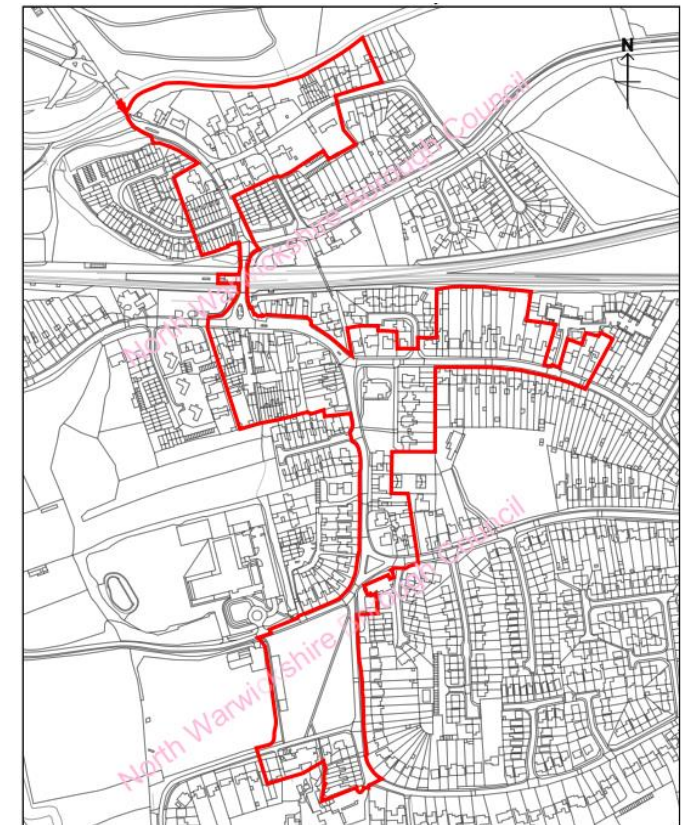
Further information about designation criteria can be found in Appendix C

1.9 Key facts of the 2024 designation Conservation Area

The total extent of the proposed Conservation Area is approximately 25 acres; including Vesey Bridge (also known as Water Orton Bridge) spanning the River Tame in the north of the village to the Victorian former Primary School facing The Green and the Edwardian brick terrace off Vicarage Lane in the south of the village.

The Area is distinct from the settlement as a whole in that it forms the heart of the village containing historic buildings central to residents' way of life since the earliest occupation of the land.

The extended Conservation Area therefore acknowledges the rich history of the village including the varied architectural styles and high-quality areas of townscape.



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WATER ORTON – THE LOCATION OVERVIEW

1.10 Location overview

Water Orton is located east of Birmingham suburbs, south of Curdworth, south-east of Minworth and north-west of Coleshill.

The existing Conservation Area is sited just south of the River Tame. The river is spanned by a Grade 2* listed bridge of single access width which forms the main route to the settlement from nearby Minworth.

Water Orton railway station is located in the centre of the settlement near to a parade of shops. The village also has medical services, primary school, two places of worship, a public house and pub/hotel.

1.11 Geology and topography

Water Orton lies on the bank of the Tame in a broad and gently sloping river valley. Geologically it is underlain by Sidmouth Mudstone, sedimentary bedrock with river terrace deposits of sand and gravel.

The geology of the area dictates the source of early building materials. In Water Orton the predominant building material is red brick utilising the local mudstone. Almost all vernacular buildings are built from red brick, however, the Church of St. Peter and St. Paul is constructed in rock faced ashlar in keeping with its status. Though this building material was likely to have been sourced further afield.

The landscape in the wider periphery of Water Orton played a significant role in terms of how the settlement originated; predominantly a rural farming community to one based on farming for industry by the mid 1800's – mainly cattle and livestock markets serving the new industrial settlement of Birmingham.

1.12 Archaeological context

A brief review of Warwickshire County Councils Historic Environment Record (HER) and Heritage Gateway, focusing on the Conservation Area reveals that the area would have been farmland with a small medieval settlement. Finds of shards of medieval pottery support HER information on the likely extent of the medieval settlement. Other finds in the vicinity of Water Orton recorded on the HER include a coin of Aethelred II (AD978-1016) and a Saxon brooch.

[Heritage Gateway – Results](#)



Axe head found on site of current Primary School

SECTION 2



CONSERVATION AREA CONTROLS

2.1 Legislation

As development within Conservation Areas is controlled by the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 and the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 2015, then certain development is restricted to ensure that the pleasant historic environment, character and distinctiveness is preserved.

Conservation Area controls apply to residential and commercial properties and are most likely to affect owners who wish to undertake works to the outside of their building or trees on their property.

Restrictions arising from national designation (Listed Buildings) apply regardless of their location within a Conservation Area.

2.2 Demolition

If you wish to demolish a building within a Conservation Area you will need planning permission **If the building is listed you will need to apply for Listed Building Consent also.** The Local Planning Authority can be approached for advice.

Trees

If you wish to cut down, top or lop any tree over 75mm in diameter at 1.5m above ground, you must inform North Warwickshire Borough Council six weeks before work begins. This allows the Authority to assess the contribution the tree makes to the character of the area and if necessary create a Tree Preservation Order to protect it.

2.3 Other works

Some works within conservation areas require planning permission and/or relevant consents:

- cladding the exterior of a house,
- any side extensions or rear extensions of more than one storey,
- alterations to roofs, including dormer windows,
- limitations on the types of advertisements which can be displayed with deemed consent,
- the installation of satellite dishes and antennae, and
- demolition or erection of walls, gates and fences over 1m in height adjacent to a public highway.

CONSERVATION AREA CONTROLS- CONTINUED

2.4 Permitted development

Some minor works remain as 'permitted development' within Conservation Areas.

It is strongly recommended that advice on permitted development be sought from the Council's Planning team prior to undertaking works to make sure enforcement proceedings are avoided on unauthorised development.

2.5 Previous decisions?

Has your property had previous planning permissions?

Some Decision Notices contain conditions that restrict activity so it is always wise to check previous permissions on your property to ensure that there have been no restrictions (such as withdrawal of permitted development rights) stipulated.

2.6 Permitted development controls

When it is considered appropriate the Council can introduce special controls, known as Article 4 Directions, which withdraw particular permitted development rights.

The result is that planning permission is required for changes stipulated in the Direction. Common subjects of Article 4 Directions are changes to elevations or roofs of buildings fronting a highway/open space, or alterations to boundary features, installation of renewable-energy microgeneration equipment or erection of outbuildings.

Link [here](#) to Warwickshire Borough Councils' Article 4 Direction webpage

Further information about Article 4 Directions can be found in Appendix D

These restrictions are in place so that planning permission is required to enable appropriate consideration of the proposal development to prevent harmful works which could impact on the wider conservation area.

CONSERVATION AREA CONTROLS - CONTINUED

2.7 The value of controls

Latest research² into wide ranging benefits of our historic environment can be found on 'Heritage Counts' pages of Historic England's website. Research shows that heritage conservation helps to sustain and/or enhance the value of properties within designated areas.

Often it is found that when a resident is informed of the importance of the area where they live it is possible to find ways of making desirable changes to their homes or workplaces that fit with the important characteristics of the Conservation Area.

Many people in historic areas are keen to preserve their towns and villages because that is one of the reasons they felt attracted to those places as desirable places to live.

Advice

Seeking clarification if your property is impacted by Conservation Area controls is recommended prior to undertaking works that change the way it looks, either to your building or the areas around it such as boundaries or trees.

You can contact the Council's planning team on 01827 715341 or email us on: planningcontrol@northwarks.gov.uk

SECTION 3



HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT OVERVIEW (HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT RECORD RESEARCH)

3.1 Pre-Roman, Roman (up to the 5th century)

No finds or evidence dating from these periods have been identified within the Conservation Area.

Saxon (5th century to the 11th century)

Findings relating to this period are of relevance to the wider setting of the Conservation Area.

3.2 Medieval (11th century to the 16th century)

Water Orton was first documented in an Assize Roll of 1262 as Overton³ and then in 1329 when: "Richard de Clodeshale settled 30 acres of land, 10 acres of meadow, and 60s. rent in 'Overton by Coleshill' and Water Ouerton is used in the Parish register of Aston in 1546⁴. Medieval pottery shards have been found in three locations in the Area.

It is likely that the current roads in the Conservation Area follow the medieval pattern. The oldest building is The Chestnuts, a 15th century timber framed example.

3.3 Post-medieval and early modern (16th century to the beginning of the 20th century)

The village of Water Orton expanded during these periods to encompass the area south of the railway line some of which is now proposed to be included within the Conservation Area.

Buildings remaining from this period include Wakefield House dating from the 16th century and 13 Coleshill Road probably also having 16th century origins.

Water Orton was part of a large parish known as Aston Juxta Birmingham but became an ecclesiastical parish in 1871 and a civil parish in 1894. The new Church of St Peter and St Pauls, built in the 19th century replaced the original medieval example formerly sited on land to the north of Old Church Road.

3.4 Modern (1915 AD to the present)

The Victorian and Edwardian period saw the building of many distinctive houses now considered some of the appealing in the village.



Wakefield House

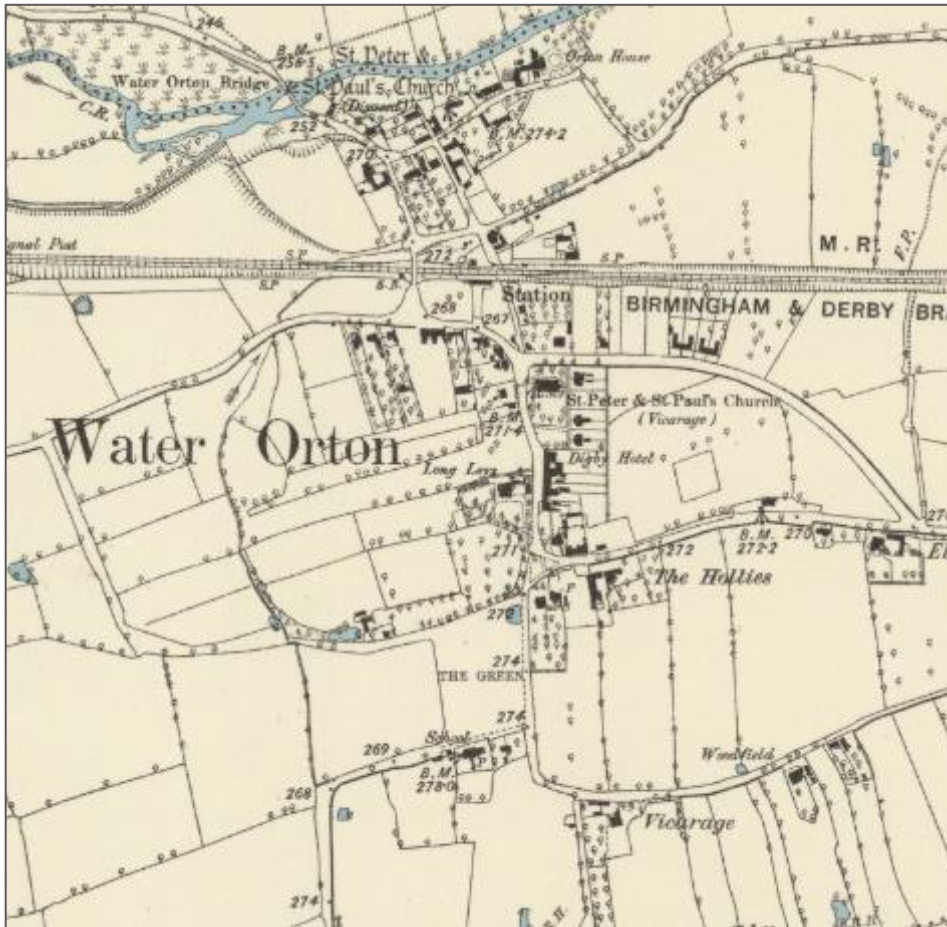


The Chestnuts



13 Coleshill Road

HISTORICAL MAPPING SURVEYED: 1886, PUBLISHED: 1887



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3.5 Village layout 1886

This map is the oldest map available for the area and shows the newly completed primary school and the Parish Church of St. Peter and St. Paul.

The map extract shows two distinct areas of occupation (northern section and southern section) and the relationship between the settlement to the River Tame, the railway and the roads.

In the northern section of the village the map still shows the location of the previous church, but it was also home to the manor house. Although these have now gone surviving early timber frame buildings provide a direct link with the medieval settlement.

Older buildings in the north of the village are laid out in large plots and cluster between the medieval stone bridge and church (now gone).

In the southern part of the village small groups of 17th and 18th century buildings can be seen. They are of a size and style common to rural villages that relied upon farming for its primary living.

The Victorian buildings developed in response to population increases as a result of the railway, usually face the highway and have long narrow plots. They also are often arranged in semi-detached pairs or terraces.

Apart from New Road, the pattern of roads appears to follow a historical form and respect the medieval field network.

Open space in the south was a focus of community gatherings and celebrations.

HISTORICAL MAPPING SURVEYED:1901 TO 1902, PUBLISHED: 1905



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3.6 Village layout 1901

This map extract shows a relatively small increase in the number of houses in the village considering the opportunity for commuting to Birmingham. Where development is seen it is in the form of smaller dwellings including two rows of Victorian terraces at Mercer Avenue and a row set back off Birmingham Road known as Albion Terrace.

However, several larger houses have been added to New Road displaying rich Victorian architectural detailing, indicating dwellings of some status.

Large buildings adjacent to Mercer Avenue are nurseries and probably sited in that location to utilise water of the Tame, proximity to the railway sidings and fertiliser.

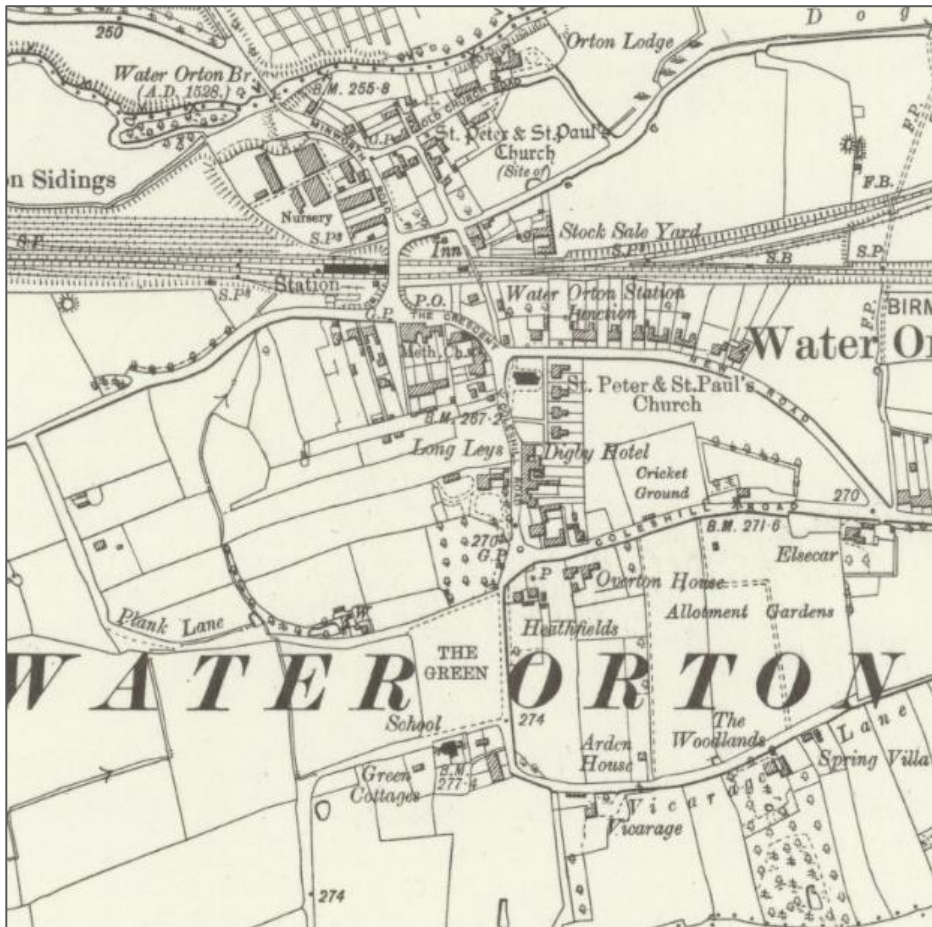
Field and plot size remains similar from the 1886 map but density of housing increases where terraces are newly built.

In the northern section the church is now demolished after years of degradation.

Land to the north of the Tame, outside of the Conservation Area, is annotated for use as a sewerage farm. Using an early filtration system, sewerage was pumped over fields and when dried out was broken up for sale as a fertiliser. New processes were needed to manage the large quantities produced in the rapidly expanding city and eventually bacterial beds took over from the huge filtration systems which had been in place for decades. The canal to the north of the sewerage farm transported sewerage, but trains on the Water Orton line also played their part in the movement of waste. The increase in the size of the sewerage works could be a factor in the limitation on growth of Water Orton during a period of huge expansion elsewhere.

HISTORICAL MAPPING

REVISED: 1913, PUBLISHED: 1925



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3.7 Village layout 1913

The main change to the village is the removal of the first train station (which had two platforms accessed by a footbridge) and the construction of the Edwardian building in 1908 that stands today. Accessed off the road bridge spanning the lines, the building stands in a prominent location between the oldest part of the settlement and the heart of the village to the south.

The number of sidings serving the train line had increased dramatically by 1913 and Water Orton is also now the site of a 'cut off' to Kingsbury with an increased number of lines. This results in a significant increase in connectivity and trains.

The only other significant buildings newly constructed in the Conservation Area is the terrace of six dwellings facing Vicarage Lane and those along New Road.

Land to the south of the train line remained in use as farmland till the building of the motorway network and the dramatic expansion of Castle Bromwich in the second half of the 20th century.

Only a small stretch of fields are remaining from this period and those that survive are under pressure from recent and imminent development. This means that remaining green spaces are an important characteristic that links the current village to its rural past visible in this map.

The current character of the wider landscape has changed dramatically but as can be seen here, many buildings shown on this map still exist in the village. These direct architectural links with important periods of time in the village's history play a central role in preserving the historic character of Water Orton.

SECTION 4



DEFINING CHARACTERISTICS OF WATER ORTON

4.1 Different townscapes

As noted in section 4.4, the amended Conservation Area contains distinct areas.

These distinctions add to the sense of a village with history yet moving with the times, and the similarities provide a visual harmony that link the areas to each other.

The size of buildings and their plots varies throughout the village partly due to the piecemeal development timeline and partly in response to the varied occupants needs. Often the plot reflected the wealth and/or importance of the resident.

The smaller the dwelling the more dense the settlement became, with examples throughout the Conservation Area of terraces on small plots built for railway workers rather than farm workers as previously seen.

Where New Road was inserted a decisive change in architectural form is also found.

4.2 Unique relationships

In addition to distinct areas arising from diverse visual, architectural and spatial characteristics, the core of the village is also physically divided by the railway that runs through it from east to west.

This visually and physically separates the northern part of the settlement from the south, with only one road bridge and one footbridge spanning the lines.

This restriction focuses movement through a small area – making it the ideal location for the commercial and religious heart of the settlement in the 19th century.

Before the arrival of the train line the village would have been one cohesive unit with a consistent rural character similar to many others in the region. The railway changed that permanently and differentiates it from many small settlements.

4.3 Shared characteristics

Medieval layout – development in the Conservation Area largely follows the medieval road and field pattern.

Building material – brick and tiles made locally using local materials are visible in all the traditionally built houses in the village.

Farming community – village name in 1262⁵ was *Overton*: ‘ofer’ meaning by the bank or edge [of water] and ‘ton’ which can mean hamlet or farm: likely indicates in this case, that the earliest medieval settlement would have relied upon farming for its primary living.

Expansion due to the railway – Each section of the Conservation Area saw Victorian and Edwardian construction coinciding with the development of the railway.

ARCHITECTURAL INTERESTS

4.4 Distinctive sections of the Conservation Area

The Conservation Area in Water Orton has distinctive sections within it. The areas are distinctive visually, architecturally and spatially.

These are:

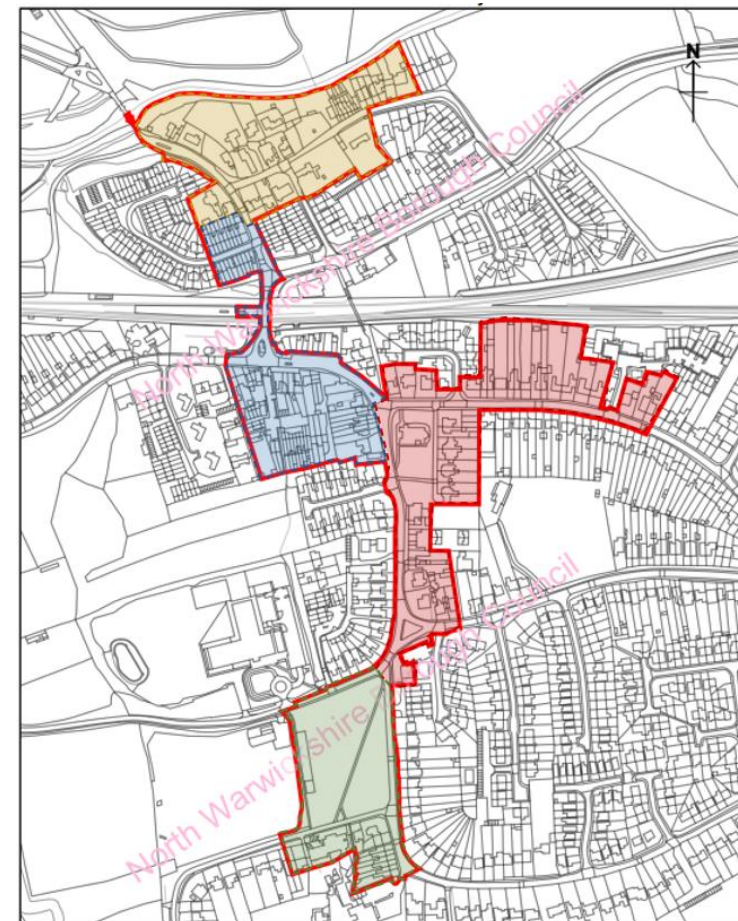
- Northern Section (pale yellow): The original Conservation Area first designated in June 1983.
- Mid/East Section (pale blue): An area of higher density spanning the railway with the commercial centre of the village.
- Mid/West Section (pale red): Largely Victorian/Edwardian dwellings with St Pauls and St Peters at its heart.
- Southern Section (pale green): An area dominated by The Green and open space.

4.5 Summary

Materials - Although the Conservation Area contains distinct places with different 'town scape' styles, they have a consistent material use of red brick and plain clay tiles. Variety is found in the use of render and timber frame buildings and intermittent use of slate roof coverings.

Styles - Timber frame vernacular architecture tends to have interesting silhouettes, consistent window and door sizes and unusual chimney designs. Older brick dwellings are plain in style with rectangular openings, often with segmented brick arches and few other details. Victorian and Edwardian buildings have architectural detailing varying widely depending on the status of the dwelling rather than age.

Scale – Apart from several key buildings (section 5.5) the scale of most buildings is domestic; two stories or two stories with rooms in the roof. The size of gardens varies in line with age and status of the building.



HISTORIC INTERESTS

4.6 The crossing of the River Tame

The stone bridge, built in 1520, crossing the Tame is one of the oldest surviving structures in the area, slightly later than the Grade II listed building 'The Chestnuts' and Grade II listed stone cross in the old church yard. It is likely that a previous bridge existed and was replaced. The type and number of very old structures indicates the importance of the area to movement of goods and is a natural location for early habitation sites.

The ground to the north of the river tends to flood so the southern banks were settled. The soil in the area is not highly fertile but would have supported arable grassland and woodland, both of which are useful for timber buildings and cattle grazing.

As a medieval settlement with existing 15th, 16th and 17th century structures, the settlement has a long history which is unmistakable in the village now.



Vesey Bridge built in 1520, one of the oldest structures in the Conservation Area

HISTORIC INTERESTS - CONTINUED

4.7 The train line and stations

The village entered a new phase of development with the opening of a new railway line in 1842 which linked Birmingham with the Tame Valley.

New houses and facilities were built to accommodate the railway and many workers settled there during its construction.

These new dwellings are evidence of the modernisation of the village and gave it a new status as an important point for bringing goods in to be sent on to Birmingham, and ultimately a much wider area as connectivity was improved.

The Victorian buildings made a huge visual impact on the village at a time when previously timber frames or plain brick vernacular architecture were the norm.

The significant increase in capacity of the railway resulted in a new train station in 1908 but only a modest expansion of the **settlement**.

The railway directly influenced the historic growth and success of the village, the associated architecture it brought remains an important characteristic of the village today.



4.8 Longevity of layout and structures

Convergence of roads in Water Orton from surrounding settlements is partly a result of its location at the medieval bridge crossing of the Tame. It is noteworthy in that a similar (or alternative settlement) was not founded at Curdworth Bridge just over $\frac{3}{4}$ mile ('as the crow flies'), indicating that Water Orton had other features in its favour that took precedence over the other crossing place.

Unlike modern suburban development which gives no consideration to the historic landscape, the layout of the roads in the Conservation Area largely follows the medieval field pattern⁶.

The combination of the medieval structures, roads and field network all still in evidence today, adds extra historic interest to the village and despite the introduction of the train line, the village retains the rural feel because of these distinctive features.

SUMMARY OF DEFINING CHARACTERISTICS

4.9 Settlement patterns

- Medieval street pattern is little changed
- Oldest roads meander and followed medieval field pattern and landscape
- New roads are straight or geometric, cul-de-sacs are common
- Medieval village pattern north/south
- Modern village orientation east/west
- Commercial centre has minimal public realm
- Oldest buildings have larger plots
- Victorian and Edwardian plots tend to be long and narrow
- Modern housing usually has smaller geometric plots

4.10 Rural characteristics

- Mature trees line highways and green spaces
- Trees form the backdrop to many buildings or longer views
- Large size of The Green and high number of mature trees gives a rural feel
- Narrow meandering streets enhance rural atmosphere
- Infrastructure encircling the village adds to the sense of remoteness from other settlements

4.11 High quality buildings

- Consistent use of materials adds harmony to street scenes
- Well preserved examples of medieval, Victorian and Edwardian buildings
- Three storey buildings in commercial centre, elsewhere usually one or two storeys
- Largest buildings are or were, community amenities
- Medieval buildings lacked a formal arrangement on their plot, but 19th century development related to the street frontage according to the status of the house – with building lines adding formality to the street scene

SETTING

4.12 What is a setting?

Setting is not a heritage asset, nor a heritage designation but its importance lies in what it contributes to the significance of the heritage asset.

A visual or physical link between the asset and the space or buildings around it does not in itself result in a meaningful and beneficial association, but when they do, these surroundings may be considered to enhance the significance of the asset.

Often the setting is considered of value to the heritage asset, such as a Conservation Area, when a historic relationship between the two can be found, for example how a network of fields or barns may be linked to a listed farmhouse.

In the case of Water Orton, the surrounding countryside is key to some characteristics of the Conservation Area. However, man-made structures also influence the character of the Area and provide meaning to how the settlement has developed.

4.13 The Tame Valley

The river sits in a largely undeveloped landscape which forms the backdrop of the northern section of the village. The route of the river shaped the layout of the medieval settlement and the gentle slopes of the sides of the valley supported the farming of the land and early expansion of the village. This close interrelationship results in the landscape forming part of the setting of the Conservation Area.

Vesey Bridge is part of the extended Conservation Area and the river is intrinsic to its setting by contributing to its significance as an early crossing point linking local settlements.

Surrounding fields that have survived are all that remain of the agricultural heritage of the village and therefore their importance to the significance of historic links with the land is high.

Mature trees that surround the Area largely exclude views to modern infrastructure and therefore help retain the rural character of the village.

4.14 The train line

The Conservation Area passes over the train line and views of its length are found on the road bridge next to the train station. Although the line is a man-made feature in the landscape it also is home to a green belt of land which contains trees along its sides. The expansion of the village in the 19th century is largely due to the coming of the train line and station, therefore it has historic interest and is part of the setting of the Conservation Area.

SECTION 5



SPATIAL QUALITIES OF WATER ORTON

5.1 Development pattern and layout

Principle routes through the village are from Lichfield Road, linking Coleshill in the east to Castle Bromwich (an outer suburb of Birmingham) in the west along the B4118. A junction in the village centre adds a further route northwest towards Minworth, also a suburb of Birmingham.

Water Orton is separated from its neighbours by transport infrastructure and a narrow strip of agricultural land. Limited routes in and out of the village result in a sense of separation from other settlements.

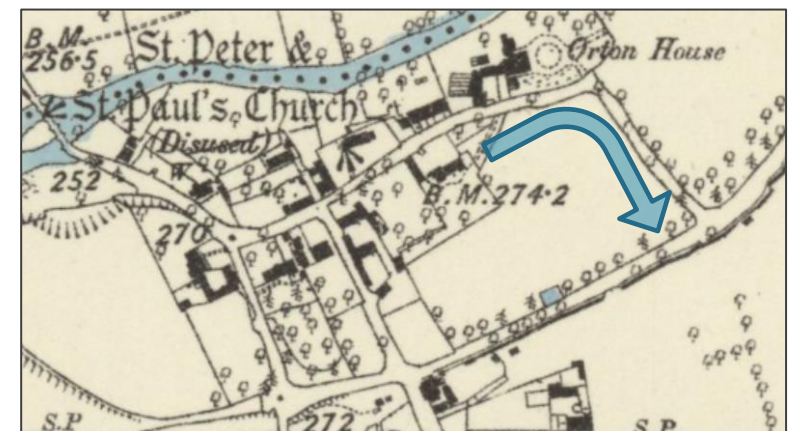
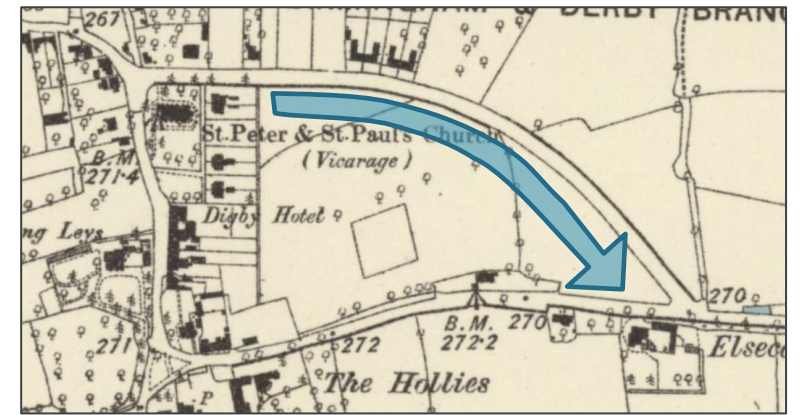
Post-war development gives the village an east/west orientation; differing from the original north/south alignment of the early layout. New road layouts depart from the medieval road pattern which had reflected the field network more closely.

As you can see from the Water Orton 1886 maps curving streets such as New Road (top right) are more fitting to motor vehicles and do not follow the traditional 'dog-leg' layout found on Old Church Road (bottom right) or Plank Lane which often reflected historic field shapes.

Cul-de-sacs became the most common housing layout from the mid 20th century and terraced housing was generally avoided or were staggered to break up building lines.

Cul-de-sacs reduce the space needed for highways and ignore the distinctive connectivity of medieval villages.

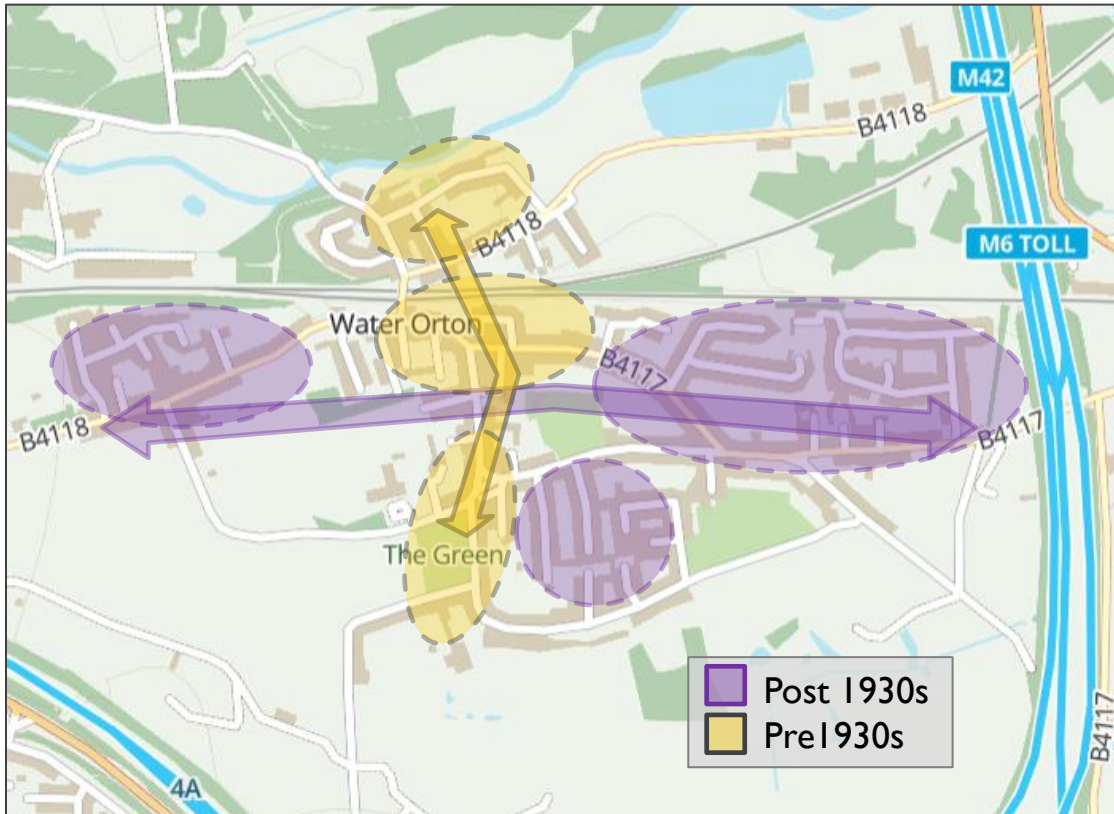
In the later part of the 20th century detached dwellings were favoured again, but in contrast to the medieval examples in the village, tended to have smaller gardens.



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SPATIAL QUALITIES OF WATER ORTON - CONTINUED

Development pattern and layout - continued



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Post 1930s housing examples near the Conservation Area: little architectural detailing and generally wider window orientations used.



Pre 1930s housing usually has more detailing at windows and doors, using stone and timber.

SPATIAL QUALITIES OF WATER ORTON - CONTINUED

5.2 Grain and density

Expansion of the village instigated by the railway led to an increase in density of housing especially where terraces were introduced.

At this time most new houses were built following existing street patterns, or behind other buildings in clusters focused on village amenities. This continued a more random pattern of housing. However, as infill spaces were used up streets were built to provide fresh development plots.

Long narrow gardens of Victorian and Edwardian housing tended to follow a building-line fronting the highway and this is a feature still used widely, albeit with shorter gardens as houses were built in a more compact form. This modern housing layout has a regular 'grain', disregarding historic fields, roads and richness of variety in form.

Mapping to show increase in density in the core of the Conservation Area



1886 map shows Victorian development



1913 map shows increased densities arising from population increase



Current map shows extent of infill and redevelopment

Examples: Grain and form of housing



Current map shows the cul-de-sac layouts with smaller gardens popular in the mid 20th century and the long narrow plots of the Victorians and Edwardian houses.

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SPATIAL QUALITIES OF WATER ORTON - CONTINUED

5.3 Movement and Activity

The Conservation Area of Water Orton includes some subdued areas, particularly in the northern section, however to the south of the train line the experience is of a busy village. As well as several community buildings which successfully provide a solid core of amenities serving local needs there is a good variety of shops adding to the village's vitality.

The train station provides opportunities for sustainable travel and the road transport links offer direct routes to Birmingham and other employment areas.

Due to the traffic infrastructure the footpath and bridleway network does not significantly extend to other settlements through rural landscape, however, options in the village for sports and recreation are excellent.

5.4 Green space quality

The Green and cricket ground are common elements in each of the historic maps (section 5). As key green spaces that have been a focus of village life for at least 140 years they have fundamental importance to residents. Their scale impacts the layout of Water Orton and their permanence adds to the village's rural atmosphere.



Trees surrounding The Green

A significant number of mature trees visually link together spaces through the historic core of the village and help soften the built forms adding interest to street scenes and vistas.



Tree cover at the graveyard at St Peter and St Paul

SPATIAL QUALITIES OF WATER ORTON - CONTINUED

5.5 Scale

The buildings within the Conservation Area have a consistent scale between one and a half to two storeys in height, with some variation in eaves and ridge heights.

However, there are exceptions. One prominent building within the mid-section on account of its height, is the two and a half storey Digby Hotel. Its scale announces its presence in the street scene at Coleshill Road as a public building with a historic communal role.

Elsewhere, it is the Parish Church and former Primary School that dominate the wider views around the Area, utilising height and prominent locations overlooking key areas of the village to attract attention to their public function and importance to the community.



The increase in scale of The Digby Public House probably dates from the 1920s or 30s when a Regency revival style was adopted. It went up in height forming a half storey in place of dormer windows, which you can see in the photograph above. The style is classical and was fashionably thought to be of higher quality compared to the more commonplace Victorian frontage that it replaced. Sadly, further modern alterations have lost the subtle detailing of the original refurbishment.



SPATIAL QUALITIES OF WATER ORTON - CONTINUED

5.6 Important Views – key buildings

Our movement through a village is made up of recognisable views that break up the journey into smaller parts. These familiar views enable us to find our way easily and assist us, almost unconsciously, to feel comfortable in a place.

Memorable places give us signposts in our journey and makes it easier to move without constant checking. Change in our built environment can jar or cause disquiet as memories are challenged and routes are doubted.

Water Orton Conservation Area centres on the medieval layout of the village and therefore holds centuries old vistas. Many generations have shared experiences of the village and hold memories from times past which link them to historical events and people .

In Water Orton some of these memorable views are focused on buildings which dominate a scene or significant landscape features such as mature trees.

Although there are many examples of replacement buildings which have changed the views around the village, many have been retained which maintain sufficient consistency of age and importance to form a distinct character. This is one way the extent of a Conservation Area is selected.

Within the enlarged Conservation Area there are several key buildings which add to status of views and act as place markers for people in a way most modern development does not.

The Train Station at Water Orton is different to many key buildings in that it is not as visible as other important buildings in the Conservation Area. This is because it sits on the rise of the road bridge over the train lines and partly obscured by trees lining the embankment. It does dominate the bridge crossing however, on a road that plays an important connectivity role in the village.



SPATIAL QUALITIES OF WATER ORTON - CONTINUED

5.7 Vistas and views

The medieval village layout is sinuous and although some roads have been slightly straightened here and there, an informal arrangement still exists.

Key views in the oldest part of the village are considered to be:

1. Views between the village and Vesey Bridge – green and enclosed, small scale domestic buildings and a sense of something beyond the current view.
2. Old Church Road has a variety of building arrangements: enclosure from high brick walls and buildings fronting the road contrasts with larger houses set back in small clusters. This variety of layout and the enhancement of mature trees gives a special character to this part of the village.



1



2



SPATIAL QUALITIES OF WATER ORTON - CONTINUED

Vistas and views - continued

The core of the Conservation Area is elongated. It stretches from the shops, past the churches to The Digby.

Key views in the core are considered to be:

3. The view encompassing the current main shopping area – contrast in styles shows progression of the village but keeps the traditional location of the commercial centre.
4. The proximity of the Methodist Church and the Parish Church connect the core with New Road and lead the viewer towards Coleshill Road, a major route through the village.
5. The Digby and adjacent terrace face Coleshill Road and have seen many changes since their construction. They still have a strong visual presence and reveal their historic ties in their architectural detailing and scale.



3



4



5



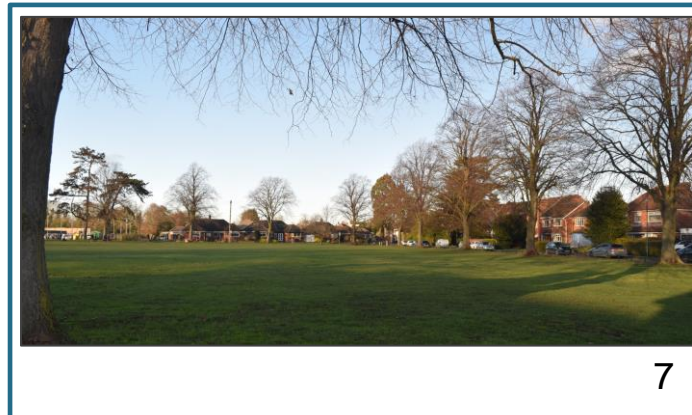
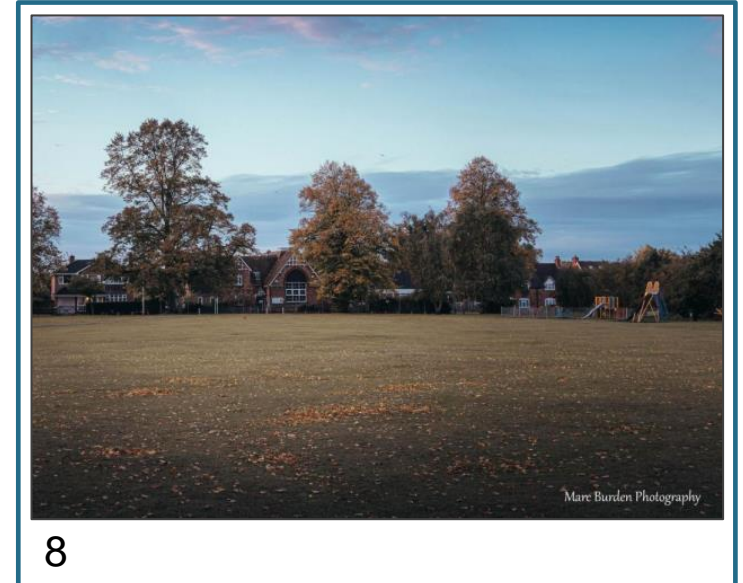
SPATIAL QUALITIES OF WATER ORTON - CONTINUED

Vistas and views - continued

The Green is still central in its community importance, but the openness of the views and lack of enclosure gives it a different character to the more built-up townscape of the community hub.

Key views in the south of the Conservation Area are considered to be:

6. Views into The Green from Coleshill Road show a complete change to the landscape of the village. The open space just visible in this connecting and unimpeded view.
7. Views across The Green are expansive and benefit from a margin of mature trees and hedging; though this is unlikely to have been the case historically it is of value now that surrounding wooded areas have gone.
8. The former Primary School and playground situated on The Green are intrinsic to the character of the area and are important focal points anchoring the open space to the community.



SECTION 6



PHYSICAL QUALITIES OF WATER ORTON

6.1 Materials

The local geology is rich with many types of bedrock, including Sidmouth mudstone which can be used to make a red bricks and roof tiles.

Red brick with the use of sandstone is the most common building material found in the older buildings. The majority of boundary walls are also of red brick, but there are walls using blue brick scattered throughout the Conservation Area also.

To a lesser degree timber, faience and metals can be found within the Conservation Area and in key buildings nearby.

However, the widespread use of red brick brings a coherence to the visual character of Water Orton.

The use of red brick in the Victorian houses such as Albion Terrace brings consistency to the whole and fine detailing adds interest. The use of coloured bricks at the Methodist Church lends status.



Albion Terrace



The Methodist Church

Timber framework is found in many of the oldest buildings but is also used decoratively in bay windows and porches with some beautiful examples along New Road and Church Avenue.



Wakefield House



New Road

PHYSICAL QUALITIES OF WATER ORTON

Materials - continued

Vesey Bridge and the 'Cross' in the old church graveyard on Old Church Road are amongst the oldest structures in the Conservation Area. Elsewhere, the use of stone tends to be more decorative. Good examples are lintels of Victorian and Edwardian houses. The Church of St Peter and St Paul is built from stone befitting of its status as a Parish Church.



Good examples of stone window lintels at New Road.

Copings and finials of terracotta can be found and are particularly conspicuous in the 1908 train station building.

Roofs in general are in a plain clay tile with the some use of slate. Decorative ridge tiles top roofs of high-quality buildings.



Faience (glazed terracotta) used in the Train Station as a decorative, but affordable material.

6.2 Surfaces

Apart from The Green the public realm is generally surfaced with tarmac. Church Avenue and some private drives are surfaced with block paving. Unfortunately, there is no evidence of historic surfaces treatments such as cobbles or stone flags.

The Green remains a large open area which is grassed over. It is maintained as a cut informal park with a range of children's play equipment. Footpaths over The Green are tarmacked.



Tarmac is common in public spaces in the centre of the village.

PHYSICAL QUALITIES OF WATER ORTON - CONTINUED

6.3 Boundary treatments

As noted in section 6.1, many boundary treatments are brick walls. They vary in height greatly but tend to be taller in the oldest section of the Conservation Area and shorter when formed from new brick and adjacent to highways. In many cases modern brick walls are topped with modern mild steel railings. Sadly, few examples of traditional wrought iron railings can be found.

Evergreen hedging is common throughout the Conservation area and adds interest to the street scene, visually softening the built environment, which is important in a village with rural characteristics.

Some sections of timber fencing can be seen in the Conservation Area but often found within gardens rather than facing a highway.



Tall brick wall on Old Church Road, incorporating a doorway and using a blue brick coping.



An old example of a blue brick wall with matching coping.



Privet used well at Church Avenue, creating a private, but welcoming space when well maintained.

PHYSICAL QUALITIES OF WATER ORTON - CONTINUED

Boundary treatments - continued

Metal palisade type fencing encloses land owned by Network Rail and the commercial unit adjacent to the road bridge. This does not enhance the Conservation Area, see the Management Plan for more information.



Galvanised steel fencing at the heart of the Conservation Area does not compare well to other boundary treatments in the village.

The Green is encircled with a low metal tubular fence on its north and eastern sides with short concrete posts on its south edge. Hedging and intermittent trees form the edge of the Conservation Area on the west boundary.

Inconspicuous boundaries retain the openness of The Green



6.4 Street furniture

There is limited street furniture except for the lamp posts and street signage in the settlement. However, a red GR VI post box is worthy of note and adds historic interest.



Post box dating from King George VI, dating from 1936 to 1952.

PHYSICAL QUALITIES OF WATER ORTON - CONTINUED

6.5 Landscaping and green spaces

Green spaces are an essential component of this type of rural village. Part of the special interest of the Conservation Area lies in its pleasant green spaces.

The green spaces within the settlement are quiet areas of reflection and important for health and wellbeing. In Water Orton they include the old and current graveyards, The Green, the area to the front of the Library and several paths and roads lined with hedging and trees (such as Church Avenue and Old Church Road).

The churchyard makes a significant contribution to the overall character and appearance of the Conservation Area, particularly as it contains some notable specimen trees which contribute greatly to the visual setting of the Church.



An area of seating outside the Library is a pleasant resting area to enjoy the trees in the highway verge and graveyard opposite.



Blue Atlas Cedar trees frame the view of the Parish Church.

The relatively unchanged open spaces to the west (south of Plank Lane) and east (north off Marsh Lane) contribute by revealing the link between the existing field network and the history of rural farming that supported the village for centuries.



Views to the east across fields form a rural backdrop to the Conservation Area.

PHYSICAL QUALITIES OF WATER ORTON - CONTINUED

Landscaping and green spaces - continued

The extensive tree cover and landscaping within gardens, along with fields and green spaces outside of the Conservation Area provide a natural backdrop to the built elements within the Area and provide a green approach on entry to the settlement from the main routes.

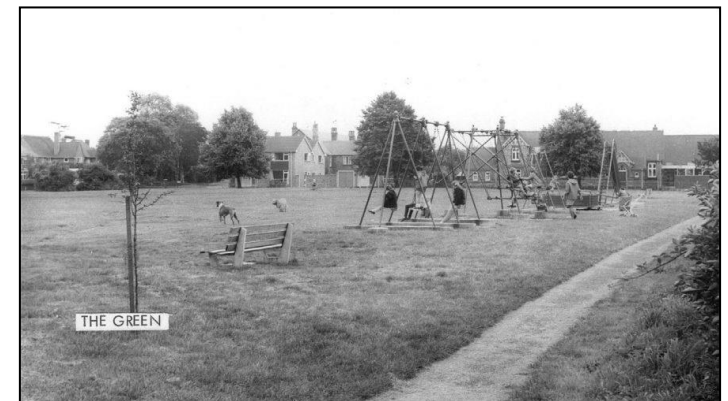
The tree belt along the train line and River Tame also contribute significantly to the overall character of the settlement.



The Green is a large public space which is found on the earliest maps. At just over 3 acres in size it is slightly bigger than the Cricket pitch but likely to be older.

It has been important to the community for decades and is a very popular destination for children and adults alike. It has a long history of supporting public events including co-hosting celebrations for the Silver Jubilee of King George V in 1935 and the Coronation of King George VI in 1937.

The openness of the space contrasts with the built-up areas in the village and as it adjoins open fields to the west it brings the space associated with the countryside into the settlement; a valuable reminder of the rural context that the village enjoys.



SECTION 7



MANAGEMENT PLAN AND PROPOSALS

7.1 Purpose of this document

- This document will help residents, investors and decision makers better achieve sympathetic changes in the extended Conservation Area to preserve or enhance the special characteristics set out in section 4.
- It will note the general condition of buildings and structures in the Conservation Area and list buildings considered to have a negative impact.
- It will outline potential areas for improvement and also provide guidance to ensure that development avoids harming the character of the Conservation Area.
- Lastly, the Management Plan will list proposals for moving forward to the next steps in the preservation of the Conservation Area.

7.2 Why it is important to aim for better

Historic buildings contribute to our economy, cultural identity and our sense of place.

Our historic environment is constantly under threat from deterioration in the same way as modern buildings or structures, but it is valued because it is a resource that cannot be replaced.

It also provides the most sustainable solution because repairing and maintaining existing buildings requires less resources than building new ones. Furthermore, materials used were often high quality and were able to be repaired or reused unlike many modern building components.

Because changes to our historic structures can have serious impacts on their life span it is important that we understand their key or defining characteristics so any works can be designed and managed to preserve or enhance rather than harm or destroy.

7.3 Summary of defining characteristics of historic Water Orton

- Historical road layouts still form major routes around the village.
- Medieval settlement in north of the village close to ancient river crossing.
- Later development responded to the introduction of the railway line in 1842 and again during expansion in 1908.
- The building material palette is mainly red brick and plain clay roof tiles. However, there are also excellent examples of timber framed houses and rendered buildings.
- Green spaces around or near key buildings often denote status and has supported important community focused activities.
- Rural character enhanced by mature trees, scale of green spaces and setting of the Conservation Area.

MANAGEMENT PLAN AND PROPOSALS - CONTINUED

7.4 Condition of structures

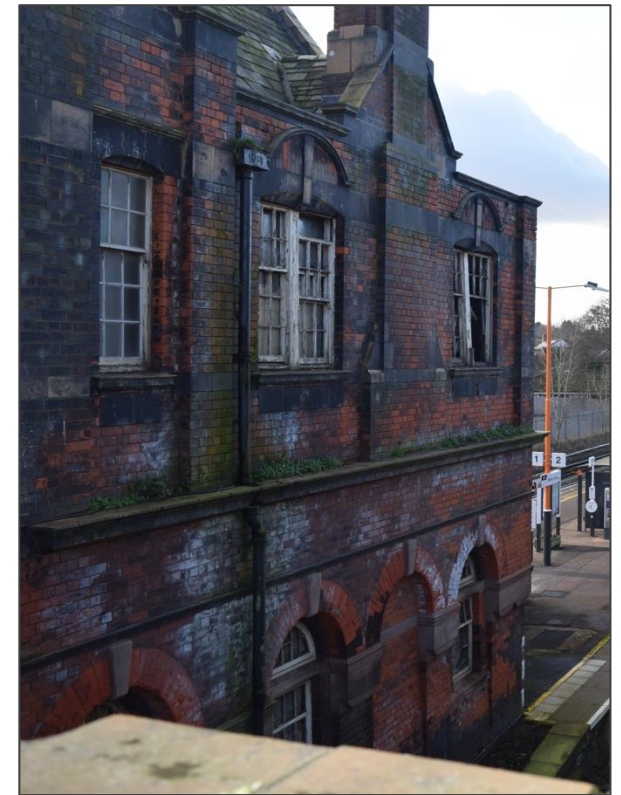
The structures within the Conservation Area boundary are generally in good condition and utilised well. This is not an exhaustive list, but includes two of the most important items:

- Vesey Bridge: a Grade II* listed stone bridge built in 1520, replacing a previous river crossing. New traffic controls appear to be successful in limiting impacts and damage to the stone-work. The stone itself is in good condition and has been periodically repaired.
- Stone 'cross': a Grade II pier on a tapering square base raised by three stone steps in the old graveyard. Deterioration of the stone has been slowed by regular maintenance clearing vegetation away and careful grass cutting in the vicinity.

7.5 Condition of buildings

The buildings within the boundary extension are generally in good condition and are mostly occupied. However, some key buildings are vacant and under-used giving rise to risk of harm from vandalism and uncontrolled deterioration. There are some issues to note which should be acted upon if the opportunity arises. In some cases enhancement may not be achievable. Set out below are some key buildings which are most susceptible to harm:

- The Train Station building: a non-designated heritage asset of three storeys in red brick with detailing in faience (glazed terracotta). The building is in a parlous state and undergoing survey for future basic repairs in advance of finding an appropriate use.



Side elevation of the Train Station showing serious decline in the historic fabric.

MANAGEMENT PLAN AND PROPOSALS - CONTINUED

Condition of buildings - continued

- Former Primary School: a non-designated heritage asset of two storeys in red brick. Now empty, awaiting redevelopment as part of a wider proposal for the school grounds. The building is suffering from vandalism despite security measures in place. The structure is currently sound but at risk.
- Parish Church of St Peter and St Paul: stone built Grade II listed Victorian building with new additions. The building is augmented by a modern church hall which hosts an active schedule. Apart from localised replacement of sandstone carved embellishment the building is in good order with no major adverse impacts on the character of the Conservation Area.



Former Primary School now boarded up, still being entered by vandals causing damage to the interior and roof.

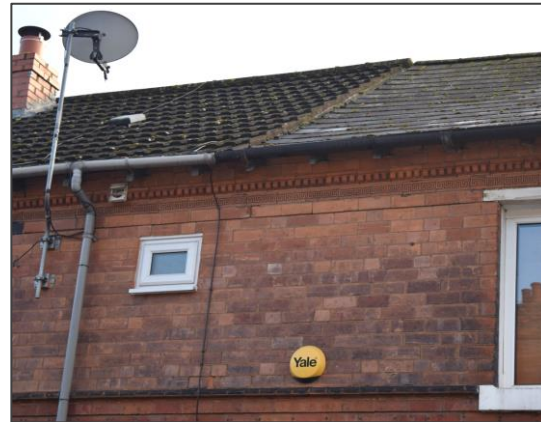


Sandstone detailing eroding at St Peter and St Paul Church

MANAGEMENT PLAN AND PROPOSALS - CONTINUED

Condition of buildings - continued

- The Methodist Church: a non-designated heritage asset of single storey in red brick with polychrome brickwork (bricks of different colour) highlighting architectural elements such as windows. The building has been extended and appears in good condition and well used.
- Timber framed buildings: including Wakefield House, The Chestnuts and 13 Coleshill Road. No reports or visual concerns arising. Buildings appear in good order considering their considerable age.
- Terraces at Mercer Avenue, Albion Terrace, 3-11 Coleshill Road and 2-12 Vicarage Lane: deterioration noted in some houses from general lack of maintenance and repair otherwise in good condition. Loss of historic fabric and detailing is concerning.



New openings and materials at Mercer Avenue



Replacement materials and style at 3-11 Coleshill Road



Ivy growth at Albion Terrace

Each issue noted has a negative impact on the historic fabric and/or the character of the buildings, and wider Conservation Area.



Raised ground levels at 2-12 Vicarage Lane

MANAGEMENT PLAN AND PROPOSALS - CONTINUED

7.6 Condition of public realm

- Loss of boundary treatments, especially historic walls, leading to the opening of road facing gardens to footpaths alters the physical enclosure of the highway and therefore the proportions of the street-scene. This harms an identified rural characteristic of the Conservation Area which contributes to the Conservation Area's architectural and historic interest as set out in section 4.
- Loss of green spaces, trees and gardens. Poorly designed infill development may lead to a loss of character that harms the rural feel of the Area, especially if it also leads to a loss of mature trees and historic garden layouts. Loss of garden frontage of housing to hard standing for parking also promotes an urban scene rather than rural one and is harmful to views throughout the Conservation Area (section 5).
- Existing spaces such as The Green, graveyards and seating area to the front of the Library are generally in good order. However, street furniture in these areas is not coordinated or chosen for their wider impact on the Conservation Area.
- Most areas of car parking are practical and basic. Whilst it is accepted that they need to be mindful of vehicular and safety requirements they do not currently enhance the Conservation Area by being sympathetic to its setting; an exception to this is the car park to The Link, off New Road which has combined hard standing areas of tarmac and 'grasscrete', successfully reducing visual and environmental impacts.



Examples of hard standing and loss of boundary treatments which have stripped the frontages of important traditional walls and gardens.

MANAGEMENT PLAN AND PROPOSALS - CONTINUED

7.7 Discordant buildings

The Conservation Area has many buildings which follow a consistent design or age within it, but there are buildings which do not and may be seen as discordant or negative features in the Area. These include modern houses infilling gaps between existing houses or where they replace buildings. Generally these do not dominate the street scene and usually they use a considerate palette of materials and scale of development. This shows that new buildings can sit within a Conservation Area without harming its special character.

Buildings not within the Conservation Area but are part of views into or out of it have an impact on the setting of the Area. Examples of possible 'negative' buildings are: the industrial unit on Marsh Lane/Minworth Road junction, the row of shops off Birmingham Road and flats at Long Leys. However, these and others are also part of the history of the village and will need to be carefully assessed when options for their development or repair are considered.



Modern dwellings at St Pauls Court



Modern shops on Birmingham Road



Modern extension to the Methodist Church



Industrial unit at Marsh Lane

MANAGEMENT PLAN AND PROPOSALS - CONTINUED

7.8 Improvements and opportunities

Change through development in the Conservation Area should enhance or preserve the special interests identified in section 4. Without proper consideration development can harm its special character, so basic steps to comply with requirements should be followed.

- Changes to appearance have to be carefully considered and not harm the character of the Area. The following can have big impacts as we have seen:
 - Windows and doors – existing openings should be retained and the pattern of framing be consistent with the historic character of the building.
 - Boundaries – historic walls should be retained as far as possible or compromises made to ensure that justifiable harm is minimised.

- Scale – the height of buildings should follow the Conservation Area's norms unless compelling justifications are made.
- Green spaces – as a rural village, residents of Water Orton especially want to see its green spaces preserved. Loss of gardens and trees to development and hard surfacing should be avoided or appropriate action taken to balance loss with justified and acceptable replacement green spaces.
- Materials – traditional materials are best used in older buildings as they work sympathetically with the existing fabric being repaired and maintained. New development also has to be mindful of the local material palette during design.

7.9 General recommendations for householders

- When replacing doors and windows seek out traditional materials and design.
- Where buildings have not lost their traditional windows and doors it is beneficial to reinstate traditional detailing which promotes a consistent appearance in the Area, important features often lost first are:
 - Door and window furniture
 - Gutters and down pipes
- Avoid the use of Portland cement as it can disfigure traditional materials and will speed up their decay.
- Get advice from the Planning Department (details on page 10) or conservation specialist before undertaking works and look at expert guidance that can be found online at the IHBC's website – [IHBC Accredited Practitioners](#)

MANAGEMENT PLAN AND PROPOSALS - CONTINUED

7.10 Proposals going forward

The aim is to enhance the special character of the Conservation Area for future generations and provide a thriving community with what it needs in order to make the most of opportunities whilst preserving its rich heritage.

These proposals are not a fixed or final list and should be reviewed periodically to maintain their relevance and to ensure that focus on what is important to people is considered.

Proposals may be implemented by individuals, community groups, Parish Council or Local Planning Authority. In each case it would be advisable to establish coordination with the Heritage and Conservation Officer at the earliest opportunity to maximise progress.

1. Work proactively with the community to find appropriate uses for underused buildings, particularly the Train Station.
2. Undertake a condition survey in the Conservation Area to gain more information on vulnerable buildings, structures and the public realm. Offer tailored advice based on best practise to reduce harm and preserve special characteristics.
3. Following survey, prepare a succession and management plan to ensure that natural loss of mature trees does not substantially harm the long-term rural character of the Area.
4. Continue the assembly of the Local List in the Borough and review periodically for relevance and deterioration of subjects.
5. Investigate the potential to develop design guidance that builds upon the 2003 Water Orton Village Design Statement to support and guide residents and prospective developers.
6. Consider the use of Article 4 Directions to stem further loss of features that front the public highway or important spaces. Please see section Appendix D for further information about Article 4 Directions.
7. Maintain an up-to-date Management Plan for the Conservation Area and periodically review its boundary so that these remain relevant and of use as guidance and a planning tool.

APPENDIX A

POLICY AND LEGISLATION

A.1 National legislation

The Civic Amenities Act, 1967 introduced legislation that recognises buildings and areas of historic interest and as such made provisions for the protection of that special interest.

In more recent years the Act has been incorporated into the Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Areas) Act, 1990, which specifically makes the provisions for the designation of “areas of special architectural or historic interest, the character and appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance”⁷

Section 71 of the 1990 Act places a duty on local authorities to “formulate and publish proposals for the preservation and enhancement of any parts of their area which are conservation areas”⁸.

A.2 National policy

The desire to preserve and enhance the significance of conservation areas is likewise reflected in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF⁹).

Amongst other things the NPPF also requires local authorities to look for opportunities to enhance or better reveal their significance [paragraph 212] and to recognise that historic assets are an irreplaceable resource that should be conserved in a manner appropriate to their significance so that future generations are able to appreciate them too [paragraph 195].

The contribution of the historic environment to place making is further recognised in the Government’s supplementary National Design Guide¹⁰ where it directs new development to be *responsive to local history, culture and heritage* [paragraph 39].

A.3 Local policy

The North Warwickshire Local Plan¹¹ (adopted 2021) sets out the Authority’s policy position on the importance of the historic environment.

The Authority aims to preserve and where possible enhance the character or appearance of Conservation Areas by the prevention of harmful development under Local Plan Policy LP15.

It is recognised in the Local Plan that Conservation Area Appraisals support applicants in preparing development proposals that contain sufficient information to demonstrate how a proposal would contribute to the conservation and enhancement of the Conservation Area.

APPENDIX A (CONTINUED)

POLICY AND LEGISLATION

A.4 Neighbourhood Plan ¹²

Adopted in 2022 the Plan is a substantial document with strong aspirations and policies for its historic character based on six Character and Heritage Objectives [summarised]:

1. Protect and improve local character and heritage.
2. Protect and improve conservation area.
3. Identify and protect non-designated buildings.
4. Adopt the ethos of the Village Design Statement and Supplementary Planning Guidance 2003 (SPG).
5. Maintain and improve cultural activities.
6. Maintain and improve green open spaces.

Implementing these objectives are set out in 12 policies [summarised]:

1. Any future development should respect and enhance existing character.
2. Any development in the village should refer to the Village Design SPD.
3. Pre 1920s buildings should be preserved where possible.
4. Alterations and extensions should complement original features.
5. New build development and extensions should improve rather than detract from the character and heritage of the Village.
6. The Conservation Area should be preserved and where possible enhanced.
7. The Parish Council (PC) shall survey the village for buildings or structures that need to be considered for listed status.
8. Work proactively to ensure there is the right mix of new homes in terms of type size and tenure.
9. Landscape character should be preserved as much as possible by respecting the Green belt, retaining green verges for residents and visitors.
10. The PC and Warwickshire County Council shall enhance the Gateway entrances to the village.
11. The PC shall maintain existing green spaces within the Village.
12. The PC shall review and encourage development of culture within Water Orton as referred to in other policies in this plan.

APPENDIX A - CONTINUED POLICY AND LEGISLATION

A.5 Village Design Statement ¹³

Adopted in 2003 the Statement states “*The heritage public buildings of Water Orton are much valued and appreciated for their traditional Victorian appearance, as well as their important function in the community. The residents reaction to 20th Century modern extensions and buildings suggests that wherever possible, the pre 1900 buildings should be preserved. Alterations or new extensions should complement original features to ensure consistency with the design of important buildings through the village.*”

It goes on to list “admired” characteristics:

Neighbouring buildings in similar proportion and style to each other. Red brick or light coloured render predominant. Slate or pantile roof preferred. “Victorian” design finishes. Off road parking to the side of buildings. Wall and hedge boundaries within village.

The Statement also provides summaries of design guidelines and principles to protect the character of the village, for example when proposals involve “heritage older buildings”:

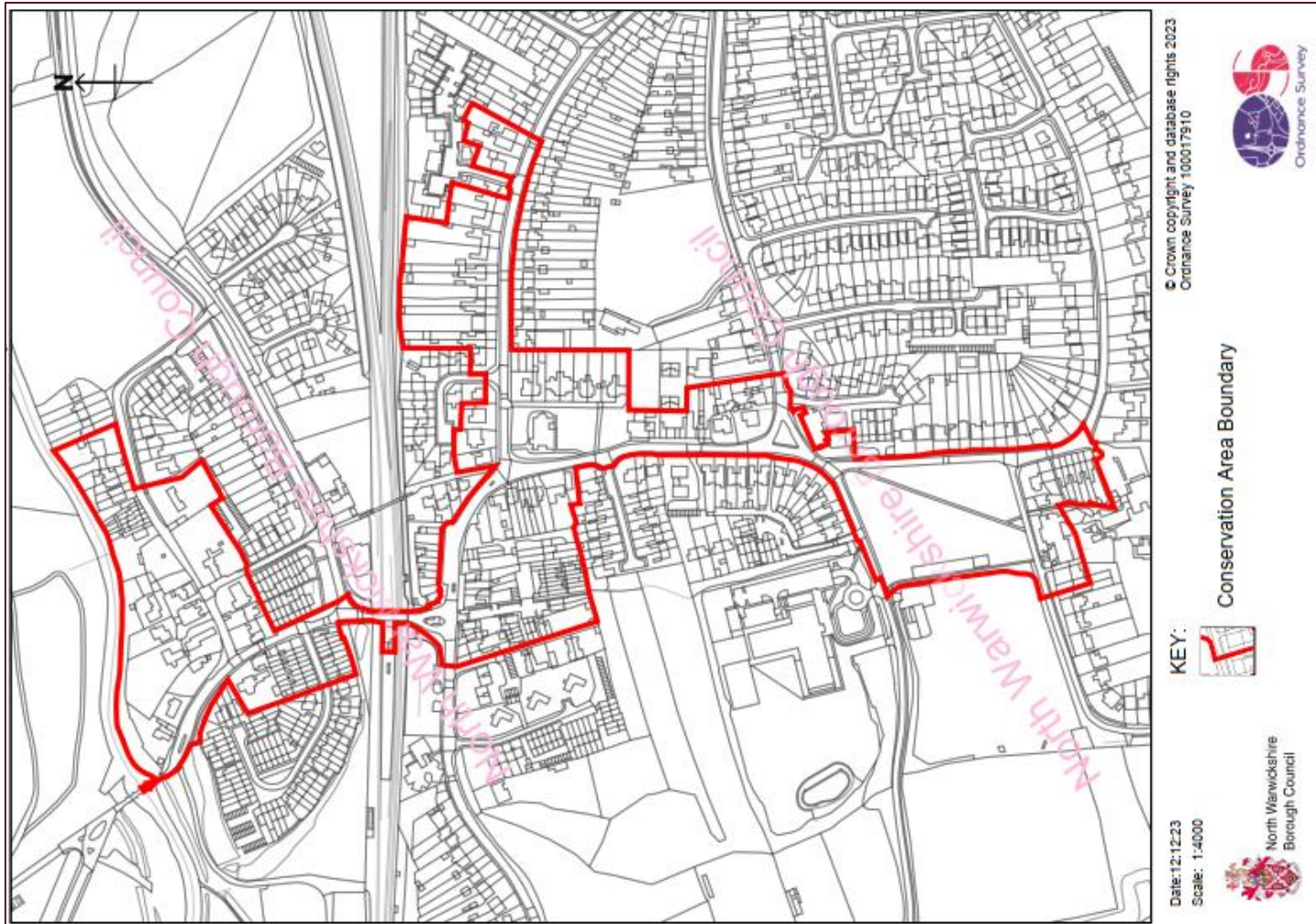
1. Renovate and repair rather than demolish
2. Identify and replicate original features and design details, for example, window design, decorative ridge tiles, fancy blue brickwork, chimney pots.
3. Respect listed and pre 1900 buildings and old settlement patterns across the village. Boundary walls, fences and hedges should be retained intact.
4. Good design promotes rural heritage and identity.

Further to these four points, several more are given in regard to new build expectations, green infrastructure and open spaces.

A clear suite of proposals are listed to improve the appearance of the village also, including controls on street furniture and signage.

APPENDIX B

MAP OF THE CONSERVATION AREA



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APPENDIX C

WHAT IS THE CRITERIA FOR DESIGNATION?

C.1 Procedure

As noted in paragraph 2.1 the planning authority undertakes reviews of their area, from time to time, to identify if existing Conservation Areas need to be reconsidered or if new designations would be appropriate.

Following a review process to establish if the area meets the criteria (set out in paragraph 3.2) successful candidates are assessed and an Appraisal prepared for consultation.

A Management Plan does not have to be prepared simultaneously but can be, making the consultation process one that considers both documents at the same time.

In this case North Warwickshire Borough Council decided to present a document that combines the two parts and take them to public consultation, followed by amendments if necessary then presentation to Councillors for consideration and adoption.

C.2 Assessment of special interest

Conservation areas are designated for both special architectural and historic interest and most areas worthy of designation will have both, though the levels may vary and one may be considered more important than another. Key elements in defining the special interest set out in Historic England's guidance¹⁴ are likely to be:

- the still-visible effects/impact of the area's historic development on its plan form, townscape, character and architectural style and social/ historic associations,
- architectural quality and built form,
- the contribution to the special interest made by the setting on the area, that is what the setting can contribute to the significance of a heritage asset,

- local distinctiveness and a sense of place which make the area unique, including the influence of sources of building materials and historic industries that have come to contribute significantly to the area's present identity,
- how the places within it are experienced by the people who live and work there and visitors to the area,
- the design, planting or past use of open spaces, green areas, parks and gardens, and trees,
- designated and other heritage assets, their intrinsic importance and the contribution they make to the townscape.

APPENDIX D

ARTICLE 4 DIRECTIONS

D.1 Article 4 Directions

An Article 4 Direction would help stem further loss of features that front public highways or important spaces, as well as provide additional protection for those features that survive well and make an important contribution to the character of the conservation area.

It may be an option to consider an Article 4 Direction for Water Orton that includes restrictions to changes set out in D.2

D.2 Options for restrictions

- Any alterations to roofs, including changes to the design, profile or materials, or installation of rooflights.
- The construction of porches or other extensions.
- Rendering or painting of previously non-rendered and unpainted elevations.
- The alteration of guttering or rainwater goods and installation of fascia boards.
- The construction, alteration or demolition of a chimney.
- Alterations to the finish, material, style, sizing, proportions, positioning and method of opening of doors and windows.
- The erection, alteration or removal of boundary treatments and gates.

D.3 Public consultation and requirements

Any Article 4 Direction must be subject to its own public consultation to determine what forms of permitted development it would be subject to, and which dwellings would be affected by it.

An Article 4 Direction should generally only be introduced where there is a threat to the character and appearance of the conservation area through alterations made through permitted development rights and there is local support for introducing this control.

APPENDIX E

LISTED BUILDINGS AND NON-DESIGNATED HERITAGE ASSETS

E.1 Heritage assets terminology.

A listed building is a designated heritage asset and as such is registered on The National Heritage List for England (NHLE).

The glossary of the National Planning Policy Framework states the meaning of a designated heritage asset is:

A World Heritage Site, Scheduled Monument, Listed Building, Protected Wreck Site, Registered Park and Garden, Registered Battlefield or Conservation Area designated under the relevant legislation.

It also states that a heritage asset is:

A building, monument, site, place, area or landscape identified as having a degree of significance meriting consideration in planning decisions, because of its heritage interest. It includes designated heritage assets and assets identified by the local planning authority (including local listing).

E.2 Listed buildings in the extended Conservation Area

1. **Grade II Church of St Peter and St Paul:** St Peter and St Paul Church, Coleshill Road, Water Orton, North Warwickshire, B46.
2. **Grade II Cross** at SP 1760 9121: Old Church Road, Water Orton, North Warwickshire, B46.
3. **Grade II The Chestnuts**, Old Church Road, Water Orton, North Warwickshire, B46.
4. **Grade II Wakefield House**, Old Church Road, Water Orton, North Warwickshire, B46.
5. **Grade II* Water Orton Bridge** [Vesey Bridge]: Water Orton Lane and Minworth, Water Orton, North Warwickshire, Warwickshire, B46.

E.3 Non-designated heritage assets

Buildings of Special local interest recommended to be included on a Local List of Non-Designated Heritage Assets: Methodist Church, Birmingham Road.

- Nos. 1,3 and 5 Birmingham Road
- Water Orton Station ticket office and waiting rooms.
- Digby Hotel, Coleshill Road.
- Former Village School, Attleboro Lane.
- Pedestrian Footbridge, Station Drive.
- Nos 21-23 Birmingham Road.
- Nos. 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8 Church Avenue
- No. 2 New Road
- 13 Coleshill Road
- 18 Coleshill Road
- Nos. 3, 5a, 5, 7, 9 and 11 Coleshill Road.
- The Dog Inn, Marsh Lane
- Nos. 2,4,6,8,10,12 and 14 Coleshill Road.
- The Cottage, New Road.
- No. 3 New Road.
- Solus, Station Drive

Others to be considered located on New Road and Attleboro Lane at a later date.

APPENDIX F

PICTURE SOURCES

Cover picture and section pages: The Green – Water Orton Picture Book (WOPB)

Page 6: Axe Head – Network Archaeology

Page 12: Wakefield House, The Chestnuts - WOPB. 13 Coleshill Road. – North Warwickshire Borough Council Officer (NWBC)

Page 19: Vesey Bridge – Water Orton Neighbourhood Plan

Page 20: Train station (B/W) – Reproduced from the “Our Warwickshire” website © WARWICKSHIRE COUNTY RECORD OFFICE. Train station – Marc Burden Photography

Page 25: Marsh Lane, Mickle Meadow, New Road and Vicarage Lane – NWBC

Page 27: The Green and ariel view of Water Orton – WOPB

Page 28: B/W Digby Hotel - Reproduced from the “Our Warwickshire” website © WARWICKSHIRE COUNTY RECORD OFFICE. Colour picture Digby Hotel - NWBC

Page 29: Train station – NWBC

Page 30: Minworth Road looking south and north, Old Church Road looking east – NWBC

Page 31: Birmingham Road looking east – NWBC. Birmingham Road looking south – WOPB. Coleshill Road looking south and north – NWBC

Page 32: Coleshill Road looking south – NWBC. The Green looking north – NWBC. The Green looking south - Marc Burden Photography

Page 34: Albion Terrace, The Methodist Church, Wakefield House and New Road – NWBC

Page 35: New Road, Train station and Birmingham Road – NWBC

Page 36: Old Church Road, Coleshill Road and Church Avenue – NWBC

Page 37: Minworth Road, The Green and Post Box at Attleboro Lane – NWBC

Page 38: Land adj. The Library – Google Street View. St Peter and St Paul Church and Old Church Lane looking east – NWBC

Page 39: View from railway bridge – WOPB. The Green - Reproduced from the “Our Warwickshire” website © WARWICKSHIRE COUNTY RECORD OFFICE.

Page 42: Train station – NWBC

Page 43: Former primary school – NWBC. St Peter and St Paul Church – Quinquennial Inspection Report 2022.

Page 46: St Pauls Court, shops at Birmingham Road, The Methodist Church and industrial unit on Marsh Lane - NWBC

APPENDIX G

DESIGNATION PROCESS AND TIMELINE

- Water Orton Conservation Area first designated: June 1983.
- Review of Conservation Area: 2022
- Extension to 1983 designation public consultation: 16.06.22 to 27.07.22
- Review of feedback and reassessment of boundary, appraisal and management plan: January 2023
- Planning and Development Committee consider amended extension: 06.02.23
- Draft consultation documents prepared: 2023
- Councillor feedback on draft consultation documents: 15.12.23
- Public consultation on amended extension to Water Orton Conservation Area: 05.01.24 to 26.01.24
- Executive Board consideration: 12.02.24
- Possible Full Council consideration: 21.02.24

APPENDIX H

SOURCES OF INFORMATION

H.1 Sources

- Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (revised Sept 2023): National Planning Policy Framework.
- Historic England (2019) Conservation Area Designation, Appraisal and Management Historic England (2016) Local Heritage Listing Historic England (2008)
- Conservation Principles, Policies and Guidance Historic England (2017) Warwickshire Historic Environment Record
- The Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order, 2015 (as amended)
- Pevsner, N, Pickford, C, The Buildings of England: Warwickshire, (2016), 466

H.2 Internet sources noted in text

- 1.NPPF Dec 2023: [National Planning Policy Framework \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-planning-policy-framework)
2. Historic England
<https://historicengland.org.uk/research/heritage-counts/>
3. Nottingham University Survey of British Placenames:
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4. Nottingham University Survey of English Place-Names
[Water Orton :: Survey of English Place-Names \(nottingham.ac.uk\)](https://www.nottingham.ac.uk/research/heritage-counts/)
5. Nottingham University Survey of English Place-Names
[Water Orton :: Survey of English Place-Names \(nottingham.ac.uk\)](https://www.nottingham.ac.uk/research/heritage-counts/)

6. Chapter 3. Network Archaeology Trial Trench Evaluation

[Water Orton Primary School: archaeological trial trench evaluation \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/water-orton-primary-school-archaeological-trial-trench-evaluation)

7. Section 69 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990

[Planning \(Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas\) Act 1990 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1990/9/section/69)

8. Section 71 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990

<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1990/9/section/71>

9. NPPF Dec 2023: [National Planning Policy Framework \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-planning-policy-framework)

10. National Design Guide, January 2021

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-design-guide>

APPENDIX H

SOURCES OF INFORMATION

H.2 Internet sources noted in text - continued

11. North Warwickshire Borough Council adopted local plan Sept 2021

https://www.northwarks.gov.uk/downloads/download/2682/adopted_local_plan_2021

12. Water Orton Neighbourhood Plan 2021

https://www.northwarks.gov.uk/downloads/download/2707/neighbourhood_development_plan_for_water_orton

13. Water Orton Village Design Statement 2003

https://www.northwarks.gov.uk/download/downloads/id/3474/design_guidance_for_water_orton_2003.pdf

14. Historic England Advice note 1: Conservation Area Appraisal, Designation and Management

<https://historicengland.org.uk/images-books/publications/conservation-area-appraisal-designation-management-advice-note-1/>

H.3 Other internet sources

Historic England

<https://historicengland.org.uk/research/heritage-counts/>

Birmingham Conservation Trust at:

www.birminghamconservationtrust.org.

British Geology Society at:

<https://www.bgs.ac.uk/discovering-geology/map-and-resources/maps>.

Historic England images and books:

<https://historicengland.org.uk/images-books/publications/conservation-area-appraisal-designation-management-advice-note-1/heag-268-conservation-area-appraisal-designation-management/>

Historic Environment Record

<https://timetrail.warwickshire.gov.uk>.

Listed Buildings and other assets designated at national level can be found via the National Heritage List for England (NHLE):

<https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/map-search>

Local Plan for North Warwickshire, 2021:

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<https://maps.nls.uk/view/109584609>

APPENDIX H

SOURCES OF INFORMATION

H.3 Other internet sources - continued

'Parishes: Water Orton', in A History of the County of Warwick: Volume 4, Hemlingford Hundred, ed. L F Salzman (London, 1947), pp. 262-263. British History Online

<http://www.british-history.ac.uk/vch/warks/vol4/pp262-263>.

Tame Valley Wetlands

www.tamevalleywetlands.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2014/04/TVWLPS-LCAP-Section04.pdf

The Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Areas) Act, 1990

<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1990/9/section/71>

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H.4 Acknowledgements

With thanks to the Historic Environment Record, and the Museum Services at Warwickshire County Council for providing information and advice.

Agenda Item No 10

Executive Board

12 February 2024

**Report of the Interim Corporate Director
– Resources (Section 151 Officer)**

**The Proposed 3 Year Capital
Programme 2024/25 to 2026/27**

1 Summary

- 1.1 This report puts forward proposals for the Three Year Capital Programme and outlines the availability of capital resources to fund the programme. The report recommends the options available.

Recommendations to the Board

- a That the Board adopts the Revised Capital Programme for 2023/24 as set out in Appendix A;**
- b That the Board adopts the Three Year Capital Programme for the period 2024/25 to 2026/27 as set out in Appendix B, subject to the transfer of funding from the Business Rate Fluctuation Reserve totalling £1,553,580 to fund vehicle purchases. This recommendation is in the General Fund Summary report also on this agenda but also includes vehicles in years 2023/24 and 2027/28 therefore the figure is higher at £2,611,310; and**

Recommendation to Council

- c That the prudential indicators set out in Section 9 are approved, subject to any changes that may be required as a result of decisions taken during this meeting.**

2 Background

- 2.1 The Council is permitted to borrow to fund capital expenditure, but no longer receives government support for any new borrowing. The Council has the ability to undertake unsupported borrowing if the business case for the project is affordable. Currently the General fund has no external borrowing but does have internal borrowing of £4.7m.
- 2.2 The majority of housing capital spending is funded from the revenue generated through the Housing 30 Year Business Plan. In addition, borrowing is used as needed.
- 2.3 Other sources of finance are required to enable the Council to fund the Capital Programme and we will continue to be dependent on the use of capital receipts

from the sale of Council Houses and land, together with external sources, such as specific grant funding.

- 2.4 The Council has benefited from additional business rates above its baseline funding level and is able to retain a proportion of these. Whilst some are held in case of successful future appeals by ratepayers, the level of business growth achieved has been above expectations and put into a business rate fluctuation specific reserve as this income stream is volatile and difficult to predict with certainty, plus the Government will be resetting the current system which will see the income for this Council reduce significantly as built into the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS). The additional income for 2023/24 and 2024/25 has been built into the base budget figures but earlier years income was put into the specific reserve, and it is recommended that this is used where appropriate to support the General Fund capital programme, reducing the need to borrow.

3 **2023/24 Revised Capital Programme**

- ... 3.1 In relation to capital expenditure, Appendix A shows the originally approved programme for 2023/24 alongside the in-year movements. The revised position is £7,355,090 less than the approved programme.

- 3.2 The revised budget for the HRA housing programme has increased by £390,000 as additional budgets were needed to sufficiently upgrade the electrics of the councils housing stock and to remedy a structural issue at a 3-bed property.

- 3.3 Within the General Fund programme, provisions for the LUF Bid, Replacement leisure facility at Polesworth, and the Artificial grass pitch at Royal Meadow Drive have been pushed back into 2024/25. Provisions for both the Coleshill Car Park project and the Structural maintenance of car parks programme have also been pushed back into 2024/25. The Vehicle Replacements have taken place with some still yet to be delivered.

- 3.4 Within Information Services, the additional work involved in implementing the environmental health, planning and finance systems have had an impact on other planned work. Allocations for the planning system has been carried forward into 2024/25.

- 3.9 The final actual expenditure out-turn for 2023/24 could still differ to the revised position shown. It is difficult to predict when some work will be completed, like the Multi Trade for Private Sector Housing are reliant on the timing of various works over which the Council has no control. In line with normal practice, the Executive Board may be asked to approve the carry over of some of these budgets into 2024/25, once the final spend for 2023/24 is established.

4 **Formulating the Capital Programme**

- 4.1 The Council needs to control its capital programme carefully, firstly to ensure that available resources are targeted effectively towards meeting corporate

targets and secondly, to take into account the effect that capital expenditure has on revenue budgets.

- 4.2 The capital programme, by its nature, is long term and therefore the initial programme drawn up is for a ten year period to 2033/34. However, as both expenditure and funding are difficult to predict so far in advance, a more detailed three-year programme has also been developed. The programme is kept under review and revised as new projects, service requirements are needed.

5 10-Year Capital Resource Forecast - 2024/25 to 2033/34

- 5.1 The resources for 2024/25 to 2033/34 have been estimated using the following assumptions:

- Capital receipts will be received from Right to Buy sales. The Council has entered into an agreement with the government which allows the retention of a greater proportion of these receipts. The additional receipts retained must be used for the construction/purchase of new affordable properties within 5 years of receipt;
- Future year estimates of the Disabled Facility Grant have not been included on the basis that all government funding in relation to this grant will be transferred from the Council to the Heart project;
- The use of revenue contributions to fund HRA expenditure, together with increases in borrowing where needed;
- Transfer of funding from the Business Rate Fluctuation Reserve totalling £1,553,580 to fund future vehicle purchases between 2024/25 to 2027/28
- Borrowing will also be used for the purchase of General Fund vehicles amounting to £4,657,160 from 2028/29 to 2033/34

- 5.2 The expected resources for the period 2024/25 to 2033/34 are shown in the table below:

	HRA £'000	Gen Fund £'000	Total £'000
Resources b/fwd	(4,096)	(6,099)	(10,195)
Revenue Contributions to capital schemes	(40,687)	(1,787)	(42,474)
Borrowing/Leasing	(16,450)	(7,800)	(24,250)
Capital receipts	-	-	-
Capital receipts – New Build	(7,155)	-	(7,155)
Total	(68,388)	(15,686)	(84,074)

- 5.3 This gives a total of £84.074 million available resources over the ten-year period to 2033/34. HRA resources include an expected £7.155 million that will be limited to use on new build schemes, for up to 40% of the scheme cost. In the event that these cannot be used in the required timeframe, they will have to be returned to the government.

5.4 General Fund resources include the proposed transfer of £1.554 million from the Business Rate Fluctuation Reserve set out elsewhere on the agenda.

5.5 It must be emphasised that figures for 2024/25 onwards are indicative only, and firmer figures will only be available a few months ahead of the relevant year.

6 Ten Year Capital Expenditure Forecast – 2024/25 to 2033/34

6.1 An initial forecast of all potential capital projects has been collated covering the next 10 years, including both HRA and GF schemes. This followed an analysis of the general fund building maintenance requirements and a detailed breakdown of the key components needed to maintain the Decent Homes Standard within the Council's housing stock in the future.

6.2 Given the constraints on available funding, a draft 10-year capital programme commencing in 2024/25 has been compiled based on the approved schemes from 2023/24. The opportunity has been taken to assess any new schemes and review schemes previously classed as non-essential, to assess whether this classification is still valid. The review also gave the opportunity to reconsider the timing of existing schemes.

6.3 A number of General Fund schemes were moved back into 2024/25, relating to IT schemes and maintenance work at the car parks. Along with the replacement Leisure Facility schemes and the Artificial Grass Pitch.

6.4 The draft programme is summarised below, and the details are shown in Appendix B:

Initial Forecast 2024/25 to 2033/34	£000
HRA	(60,747)
General Fund	(17,013)
TOTAL	(77,760)

6.5 As shown in the previous section, the total estimated resources for the ten-year period are £84.074 million compared with the expenditure bids of £77.760 million. This expenditure reflects the total bids put forward for consideration that have been identified to ensure the continuity of current services.

6.6 This leaves a surplus of £6.314 million in overall terms, although each Fund needs to be considered separately. Whilst the HRA funds exceed the draft programme by £7.640 million, £7.155 million of this is subject to possible return to the Government. With regards to the General Fund, there is an expected deficit of £1.326 million in the General Fund programme over the ten-year period. The shortfall in resources is expected to start in 2027/28, as available funding will be used in 2026/27. The transfer of funding from the Business Rate Fluctuation Reserve is essential to enable the full capital programme for 2024/25 to proceed.

7 Unallocated Schemes

- 7.1 The level of schemes required for inclusion in the capital programme outweighs the General Fund resources available. As a consequence, some projects which have been assessed as non-essential or unaffordable have not been included in the proposed programme. These include improvement works at existing pavilions owned by the Council. Only limited funding has been included for the replacement of Atherstone Leisure complex, as external funding will be needed to progress this scheme.
- 7.2 In addition, over the coming years there are also some IT systems that will need to be reviewed, to assess whether they still meet user needs, both corporate and service specific.

8 Three-Year Capital Spend and Resources to 2026/27

- 8.1 As well as the long term programme, it is prudent to ensure that the Council can afford the capital schemes required in the medium term. As such, schemes included in the next 3 years have been assessed in more detail.
- 8.2 The table below highlights that there is an overall surplus generated over the 3 year period. However, looking at each Fund separately highlights a particular issue for the General Fund.

Potential 3 year programme	HRA £'000	Gen Fund £'000	Total £'000
Resources b/fwd	(4,096)	(6,099)	(10,195)
Total 3 year resources	(14,785)	(3,919)	(18,704)
Total 3 year expenditure	16,604	9,835	26,439
Total	(2,277)	(183)	(2,460)

- 8.3 If resources come in as expected, there will be just enough resource to fund the General Fund 3 year capital programme. Resources for the longer term programme will need to be found.

9 Prudential Indicators for Capital Investment

- 9.1 The introduction of the Local Government Act 2003 resulted in a change in the capital finance system for Local Authorities and established a prudential framework for capital investment. Under this system, Councils are free to determine the affordability of their capital investment proposals and of any borrowing required to finance those proposals.
- 9.2 A prudential code was developed in 2011, which required the Council to consider the affordability of its proposals, their prudence and sustainability, value for money, asset management planning, practicality and service objectives. The prudential code was updated in September 2018, and then again in December 2021.
- 9.3 In addition to the information already provided within this report, the Council is required to set and review regularly a range of indicators that have been developed as part of the Code, which will be used to support capital investment

decision-making. As risk and uncertainty form a key part of capital investment planning, the Code requires a minimum three year integrated capital and revenue spending plan to determine the indicators. These need to be set as part of the overall budget-setting process. The Code requires a number of indicators to be set and these are set out below.

- 9.4 **External Debt Indicators** – these include the Authorised Limit and the Operational Boundary. The Operational Boundary links to the Authority’s plans for capital spending and borrowing requirement, with some provision allowed for cash flow requirements. The Authorised Limit is higher than the Operational Boundary as it provides additional headroom to allow for unusual cash movements.

	2023/24 £000	2024/25 £000	2025/26 £000	2026/27 £000
Authorised Limit for External Debt	76,323	78,320	76,907	75,354
Operational Boundary	69,235	71,152	69,656	68,016

- 9.5 **Capital Expenditure Indicators** – the Council is required to make a reasonable estimate of the capital expenditure it plans to incur in each of the next three years, and report actual expenditure incurred at year-end. Using the proposals contained within this report, these are set out below, together with the actual position for 2022/23 and the revised position for 2023/24.

	Actual 2022/23 £'000	Revised 2023/24 £'000	Original 2024/25 £'000	Forecast 2025/26 £'000	Forecast 2026/27 £'000
HRA	9,518	8,871	4,090	4,175	4,262
HRA - New Build	729	1,511	1,332	1,359	1,386
General Fund	4,238	3,137	8,796	676	362
Total	14,485	13,519	14,218	6,210	6,010

- 9.6 **Capital Financing Requirement Indicators** – these indicators measure the Council’s underlying need to borrow to fund capital expenditure, which is the normal level of borrowing expected. The actual capital financing requirement as at 31 March 2023, the revised estimate for 2023/24 and estimates for the next three years are set out below. The method of calculation is set out as Appendix C.

	Actual 2022/23 £'000	Revised 2023/24 £'000	Original 2024/25 £'000	Forecast 2025/26 £'000	Forecast 2026/27 £'000
HRA	46,453	51,201	50,274	49,048	47,671
General Fund	12,188	11,947	14,710	14,356	14,006
Total	58,641	63,148	64,984	63,404	61,677

- 9.7 **Capital Financing Cost Indicators** – an indicator of affordability is the estimated ratio of financing costs to net revenue stream in percentage terms. If the ratio is increasing rapidly over time, then a larger proportion of revenue resources are being taken up by financing costs, which could be used to fund direct service delivery. This indicator is calculated for both the General Fund and the Housing Revenue Account, and these are shown below. The calculation of both is shown in more detail in Appendix D.

...

	Actual 2022/23	Revised 2023/24	Original 2024/25	Forecast 2025/26	Forecast 2026/27
HRA	(8.55%)	(20.87%)	17.04%	27.91%	19.59%
General Fund	(5.31%)	(7.84%)	(4.60%)	(3.51%)	(2.09%)

- 9.7.1 HRA financing costs reflect both the scheduled repayment of the debt taken out by the Council as part of the move to self financing and the new loans required to fund the capital programme. The movement in the General Fund amount reflects the expected changes in investment rates and the use of borrowing to fund vehicle replacements and the new leisure facility in Polesworth.

- 9.7.2 The indicators required by the Code may need to be amended, depending on the decisions on the capital programme taken by this Board.

- 9.8 **Net debt and the capital financing requirement** – an indicator of prudence. In order to ensure that over the medium term debt will only be for a capital purpose, the Authority must ensure that external debt does not exceed the total capital financing requirement for the preceding year and the estimates for the next two financial years. Current external borrowing is £41.979 million, well below the Capital Financing Requirement projections shown in Appendix C.

10 **Conclusion**

- 10.1 Some sources of funding are specific to particular types of expenditure. The proposed programme takes this into account, so Members need to be mindful of this should they wish to vary the proposed programme.
- 10.2 Only those schemes that either meet a statutory duty or which score highly against the Council priorities and risk assessment are included in the Capital Programme.
- 10.3 The proposed 3 Year Programme has a level of unallocated balances for the HRA which is felt prudent as there are certain risks to some income streams

and potentially unforeseen costs that may be unavoidable. However, all balances are allocated for the General Fund, leaving the 3 year programme at risk if estimated resources are not achieved.

11 Report Implications

11.1 Finance and Value for Money Implications

11.1.1 The financial implications of this 3 Year Capital programme, in terms of the cost of funding, are given below.

GENERAL FUND	2023/24 £	2024/25 £	2025/26 £
Financing costs	556,740	22,660	10,880

Not all of the financing costs are additional, as some relate to the replacement of existing vehicles. The maintenance costs of the vehicles are included with the existing revenue allocations.

HRA	2023/24 £	2024/25 £	2025/26 £
Financing costs	2,996,450	3,029,170	3,176,270

The majority of the financing costs for the HRA are funded through revenue contributions to capital expenditure, although borrowing has also been used.

11.2 Environment and Sustainability Implications

11.2.1 Continuing to follow the capital strategy when setting a capital programme will ensure that the Council continues to achieve its priorities within the available capital resources.

11.3 Equality Implications

11.3.1 The proposals for the capital programme will need to be equality assessed for impact and needs and some of the schemes highlighted in the report will have positive impacts including the housing developments and improvements to Leisure facilities.

11.4 Safer Communities

11.4.1 The identified schemes would have positive implications for the development of safer communities, in that the provision of good quality leisure opportunities reduces the likelihood of criminal and/or anti-social behaviour.

11.5 Risk Management Implications

11.5.1 There are a number of risks associated with setting a capital programme, as assumptions are made on the type and level of available resources, as well as the required level of expenditure. To minimise the risks, decisions on these have been taken using past experience and knowledge, informed by current forecasts and trends. Risk will be managed through the production of regular budgetary control reports, assessing the impact of variances and reporting on the need to take any further action.

The Contact Officer for this report is Nigel Lane (719371)

Background Papers

Local Government Act 1972 Section 100D, as substituted by the Local Government Act, 2000 Section 97

Background Paper No	Author	Nature of Background Paper	Date

Revised 2023/24 Capital Programme

Appendix A

Expenditure Proposals	Approved Budget	In Year Virements	Moved to future year	Other Changes	Revised 2023/24
HRA Assets					
Staffing	309,580	-	-	-	309,580
Electrics	600,000	340,000	-	400,000	1,340,000
Kitchens and Bathrooms	600,000	-	-	(200,000)	400,000
Heating	500,000	-	-	-	500,000
Windows and Doors	450,000	-	-	(350,000)	100,000
Energy Saving Measures	250,000	-	-	(150,000)	100,000
Disabled Facilities Adaptations	200,000	-	-	-	200,000
Roofing	400,000	-	-	-	400,000
Improvement works to blocks of flats - external and common areas	250,000	-	-	-	250,000
Improvement works to blocks of flats - Drayton court	148,810	-	-	300,000	448,810
Improvement works to blocks of flats - Abbey Green Court	4,000,000	-	-	-	4,000,000
Replacement of DLO vehicles	429,710	-	-	-	429,710
Replacement of Housing Inspectors vehicles	43,260	-	-	-	43,260
Replacement of Neighbourhood Warden vehicles	-	-	-	-	-
Multi Trade Contract	300,000	50,000	-	-	350,000
New Build	1,510,960	-	-	-	1,510,960
New Build	-	-	-	-	-
HRA TOTAL	9,992,320	390,000	-	-	10,382,320
General Fund Assets					
Decent Homes Grants & Works (Private Sector)	20,000	-	-	-	20,000
Financial Management System Replacement	181,094	-	-	-	181,094
Computer Hardware and Software	40,416	-	-	-	40,416
ICT Infrastructure Development	75,739	-	-	-	75,739
Backing Up	30,000	-	-	-	30,000
Network Infrastructure Replacement	25,600	-	-	-	25,600
Uninterruptible Power Supply	10,000	-	-	-	10,000
Mobile Devices	10,000	-	-	-	10,000
Web Development	50,000	-	-	-	50,000
Payment Management System Upgrade	15,000	-	-	-	15,000
Planning System Replacement	27,920	-	(27,920)	-	-
Environmental Health System Replacement	65,494	-	-	-	65,494
Innage Park Admin Unit	30,000	-	-	-	30,000
External Works on Industrial Buildings	470,000	-	-	-	470,000
Refurbishment of Council Owned Buildings	45,000	-	-	-	45,000
Disabled Discrimination Adaptations	120,000	-	-	-	120,000
Car Parks - Structural Maintenance	345,000	-	(345,000)	-	-
Car Parking - Coleshill	1,000,000	-	(1,000,000)	-	-
Depot Works	30,600	-	-	-	30,600
Replacement Of Council Building Firedoors	225,000	-	-	-	225,000
Materials Recycling Facility	373,625	-	-	-	373,625
Replacement of Street Cleaning Vehicles	384,008	-	-	-	384,008
Replacement of Grounds Maintenance Vehicles	487,908	-	-	-	487,908
Replacement of Leisure Services Vehicles	17,810	-	-	-	17,810
Replacement of Cesspool Vehicles	139,000	-	-	-	139,000
Replacement of Pool Vehicles	29,000	-	-	-	29,000
Play Area Development	176,938	-	-	-	176,938
Playing Pitch Maintenance	5,570	-	-	-	5,570
LUF Bid	3,000,000	-	(3,000,000)	-	-
Replacement Leisure Facility - Polesworth	3,000,000	-	(3,000,000)	-	-
Artificial Grass Pitch	372,170	-	(372,170)	-	-
Atherstone Leisure Complex - Gym Equipment	37,095	-	-	-	37,095
Leisure Equipment	23,717	-	-	-	23,717
Capital Salaries - Management	19,090	-	-	-	19,090
GENERAL FUND	10,882,794	-	(7,745,090)	-	3,137,704
OVERALL TOTAL	20,875,114	390,000	(7,745,090)	-	13,520,024

Draft Capital Programme - HRA Housing

Name of the Scheme	Basic Details of the Scheme	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4 - 10	Total
		2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28 to 2033/34	10 Year Programme
Electrics	A scheduled programme to replace consumer units and to bring wiring in Council properties up to date.	309,000	315,180	321,480	2,437,780	3,383,440
Staffing	Housing officers who deliver the capital programme to Council properties.	330,590	340,970	350,770	2,682,960	3,705,290
Kitchens and Bathrooms	Replacement programme to ensure these facilities meet the Decent Homes Standard.	618,000	630,360	642,970	4,875,670	6,767,000
Heating	To replace heating systems which are at the end of their component life time, can't be repaired or to provide for controllable systems to meet the Decent Homes Standard.	515,000	525,300	535,810	4,063,050	5,639,160
Windows	Programmes of window and door replacements to address older installations that are not energy efficient and those that are defective.	257,500	262,650	267,900	2,031,520	2,819,570
Fire Doors	Replacement of outdated and unsafe Fire Doors in the Housing Stock	206,000	210,120	214,320	1,625,200	2,255,640
Energy Saving Measures	External Wall Insulation & Loft Insulation programmes will be required to ensure properties meet the necessary levels for energy usage.	257,500	262,650	267,900	2,031,520	2,819,570
Adaptations	Undertake adaptations to properties to improve accessibility in accordance with recommendations from social care assessors.	206,000	210,120	214,320	1,625,200	2,255,640
Roofing	To replace roofs (flat or pitched) which do not meet the Decent Homes Standard and cannot be repaired to extend their use.	412,000	420,240	428,640	3,250,340	4,511,220
Improvement works for blocks of flats - external and common areas	In 2019 we started a rolling priority programme of remedial works to blocks of flats. The works deal with blocks of flats that require extensive structural repairs.	618,000	630,360	642,970	4,875,670	6,767,000
Replacement of DLO Vehicles	Replacement as per the vehicle replacement schedule.	-	-	-	788,000	788,000
Replacement of Housing Inspectors Vehicles	Replacement as per the vehicle replacement schedule.	-	-	-	264,000	264,000
Replacement of Neighbourhood Warden Vehicles	Replacement as per the vehicle replacement schedule.	-	-	-	240,000	240,000
Multi Trade Contract	To cover a range of capital works including remedial work following fire risk assessments and schemes for garages and sheltered scheme communal rooms as well as external works and structural works.	360,500	367,710	375,060	2,844,030	3,947,300
New Build Schemes	To cover a range of new build schemes from acquisitions to construction.	1,331,890	1,358,530	1,385,700	10,507,690	14,583,810
HRA TOTAL		5,421,980	5,534,190	5,647,840	44,142,630	60,746,640

Draft Capital Programme - General Fund

Name of the Scheme	Basic Details of the Scheme	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4 - 10	Total
		2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28 to 2033/34	10 Year Programme
Decent Homes Grants and Works (Private Sector)	Assistance with repairs and replacements targeted at vulnerable households on a means tested basis to prevent deterioration and associated health effects.	20,000	20,000	20,000	140,000	200,000
Computer hardware and software, purchase and replacement	To continue to provide PC's that meet the requirements of the increasingly complex software that is used to deliver Council services and back office functions. This budget includes the renewal of the Microsoft Software licenses.	35,000	35,000	35,000	245,000	350,000
Replacement of scanner/plotter	Replacement of the existing separate scanner and plotter with a single solution.				10,000	10,000
ICT Infrastructure Development	To further develop the network and hardware structures to ensure that the Council's aspirations of home and mobile working and self service delivery are possible.	20,000	20,000	20,000	140,000	200,000
Network Infrastructure	Replacement of the existing network infrastructure.	50,000	-	-		50,000
Telephone System	Replacement of the existing telephone system.	20,000	-	-	20,000	40,000
Server Virtualisation	Replacement of the existing virtual server.	-	50,000	-	-	50,000
Backing Up	Primarily used at two levels; the day to day use of the recovery of lost data or damaged systems that need to be rolled back to a previous state. The major use is in the event of fire or theft where the backups we hold would be used to restore systems.	-	-	25,000	-	25,000
Mobile Devices	Due to Covid the Council has greatly increased the use of mobile devices over and above the use of PC's and laptops. 100 devices will have to be replaced on a 4 year cycle. This will also be used to replace the Housing direct works equipment.	5,000	5,000	5,000	45,000	60,000
Replacement Planning and Enforcement and Local Land Charges Systems	To review and assess system to ensure it still meets user needs and replace if required.	27,920	-	-	-	27,920
Web Development (Internet, Intranet and Extranets)	To review and assess systems to ensure they still meet user needs and replace if required.	-	-	-	100,000	100,000
Payment Management System Upgrade	Upgrade to Payment Management System to meet new encryption standards and introduce contact less payments.	15,000	15,000	15,000	45,000	90,000
Refurbishment of Council Owned Buildings	To carry out improvements to all council owned property.	50,000	-	-	200,000	250,000
Replacement Of Firedoors In Council Premises	Replacement of Firedoors in council premises that are not up to the current legislation.	106,100	175,400	-	-	281,500
Structural Maintenance Programme of Car Parks and Unadopted Roads	A detailed analysis of the councils car parks and unadopted roads has been carried out and has identified that the thickness of many of the surfaces is below the required levels.	345,000	-	-	-	345,000
Car Parking in Coleshill		1,000,000	-	-	-	1,000,000
Replacement of Pool Vehicles	Replacement as per the vehicle replacement schedule.	-	-	-	36,000	36,000
Replacement of Refuse Vehicles	Replacement as per the vehicle replacement schedule.	375,000	-	-	3,845,000	4,220,000

Draft Capital Programme - General Fund

Name of the Scheme	Basic Details of the Scheme	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4 - 10	Total
		2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28 to 2033/34	10 Year Programme
Replacement of Cesspool Vehicles	Replacement as per the vehicle replacement schedule.	-	-	-	171,000	171,000
Replacement of Street Cleaning Vehicles	Replacement as per the vehicle replacement schedule.	171,670	-	64,000	662,950	898,620
Replacement of Horticulture Vehicles	Replacement as per the vehicle replacement schedule.	46,340	8,370	40,480	768,030	863,220
Replacement of Leisure Services Vehicles	Replacement as per the vehicle replacement schedule.	-	-	-	21,900	21,900
LUF Bid	atherstone Leisure Complex	3,000,000	-	-	-	3,000,000
New Leisure Facility	Polesworth	3,000,000	-	-	-	3,000,000
Artificial Grass Pitch	Provision for a Leisure scheme at Royal Meadow Drive Road	372,170	-	-	-	372,170
Leisure Equipment	To replace the equipment used in the execution of various activity programmes in each of the leisure centres that conforms to industry and market standards relating to customer needs and safety requirements. The proposed investment protects significant levels of income. Whilst fitness equipment has been replaced over the last few years, there is other sports equipment that is in need of renewal.	20,000	30,000	20,000	140,000	210,000
Leisure Centre Fitness Suite Equipment Replacement	Planned full replacement of the fitness centre equipment at the three leisure centres in the Borough. This replacement will take place once the fund has built up sufficient funding for the work to take place.	-	250,000	-	250,000	500,000
Play Area Replacement Programme	Main Road, Baxterly	50,000	-	-	-	50,000
Play Area Replacement Programme	Royal Meadow Drive	50,000	-	-	-	50,000
Play Area Replacement Programme	Ridge Lane, Mancetter	-	50,000	-	-	50,000
Play Area Replacement Programme	Sycamore road, Kingsbury	-	-	50,000	-	50,000
Play Area Replacement Programme	Old Arley	-	-	50,000	-	50,000
Play Area Replacement Programme	Various	-	-	-	200,000	200,000
Capital Salaries - Management	General Fund staffing.	17,120	17,640	18,120	138,500	191,380
General Fund Total		8,796,320	676,410	362,600	7,178,380	17,013,710
Overall Total		14,218,300	6,210,600	6,010,440	51,321,010	77,760,350

Capital Financing Requirement

APPENDIX C

	HRA (£)	GF (£)	Grand Total
Actual CFR as at 31-3-23	46,452,685	12,188,504	58,641,189
Repayment of HRA borrowing	(2,350,000)	-	(2,350,000)
Repay Principal - Kingsbury Link	-	(2,682)	(2,682)
Repay Principal - Vehicles	-	(4,547)	(4,547)
Repay Principal - Lower House Farm	-	(9,117)	(9,117)
Repay Principal - Coleshill LC	-	(40,914)	(40,914)
Repay Principal - Recycling Containers	-	(1,939)	(1,939)
Repay Principal - Office Accommodation	-	(80,735)	(80,735)
Repay Principal - Play Areas	-	(17,905)	(17,905)
Repay Principal - Vehicles	(38,345)	-	(38,345)
New prudential borrowing	7,136,830	-	7,136,830
MRP	-	(84,088)	(84,088)
Estimated CFR as at 31-3-24	51,201,170	11,946,577	63,147,747
Repayment of HRA borrowing	(2,350,000)	-	(2,350,000)
Repay Principal - Kingsbury Link	-	(2,682)	(2,682)
Repay Principal - Vehicles	-	(4,547)	(4,547)
Repay Principal - Lower House Farm	-	(9,117)	(9,117)
Repay Principal - Coleshill LC	-	(40,914)	(40,914)
Repay Principal - Office Accommodation	-	(80,735)	(80,735)
Repay Principal - Play Areas	-	(17,905)	(17,905)
Repay Principal - Vehicles	(76,690)	-	(76,690)
New prudential borrowing	1,500,000	3,000,000	4,500,000
MRP	-	(80,725)	(80,725)
Estimated CFR as at 31-3-25	50,274,480	14,709,952	64,984,432
Repayment of HRA borrowing	(2,450,000)	-	(2,450,000)
Repay Principal - Kingsbury Link	-	(2,682)	(2,682)
Repay Principal - Vehicles	-	(4,547)	(4,547)
Repay Principal - Lower House Farm	-	(9,117)	(9,117)
Repay Principal - Coleshill LC	-	(40,914)	(40,914)
Repay Principal - Office Accommodation	-	(80,735)	(80,735)
Repay Principal - Play Areas	-	(17,905)	(17,905)
Repay Principal - Vehicles	(76,690)	-	(76,690)
Repay Principal - Polesworth LC	-	(120,000)	(120,000)
New prudential borrowing	1,300,000	-	1,300,000
MRP	-	(77,494)	(77,494)
Estimated CFR as at 31-3-26	49,047,790	14,356,558	63,404,348
Repayment of HRA borrowing	(2,600,000)	-	(2,600,000)
Repay Principal - Kingsbury Link	-	(2,682)	(2,682)
Repay Principal - Vehicles	-	(4,547)	(4,547)
Repay Principal - Lower House Farm	-	(9,117)	(9,117)
Repay Principal - Coleshill LC	-	(40,914)	(40,914)
Repay Principal - Office Accommodation	-	(80,735)	(80,735)
Repay Principal - Play Areas	-	(17,905)	(17,905)
Repay Principal - Polesworth Leisure Centre	-	(120,000)	(120,000)
Repay Principal - Vehicles	(76,690)	-	(76,690)
New prudential borrowing	1,300,000	-	1,300,000
MRP	-	(74,396)	(74,396)
Estimated CFR as at 31-3-27	47,671,100	14,006,262	61,677,362

Capital Financing Costs Indicator

Appendix D

	Actual 2022/23 £000	Revised 2023/24 £000	Original 2024/25 £000	Forecast 2026/27 £000	Forecast 2026/27 £000
HRA					
Interest and Investment Income	(51)	(139)	(122)	(98)	(95)
External Interest Costs	1,406	1,556	1,747	1,797	1,784
Repayment of Borrowing	2,260	2,350	2,350	2,450	2,600
New Borrowing	(4,700)	(6,600)	(1,500)	(1,300)	(1,300)
Total	(1,085)	(2,833)	2,475	4,149	2,989
Net Revenue Stream	12,695	13,574	14,526	14,868	15,258
Ratio	-8.55%	-20.87%	17.04%	27.91%	19.59%
General Fund					
External Interest Costs	12	17	15	15	15
Investment Income	(687)	(1,300)	(1,094)	(795)	(652)
Repayment of Borrowing	154	158	364	364	364
MRP	88	84	81	78	74
Total	(433)	(1,041)	(634)	(338)	(199)
Council Tax	4,784	4,986	5,155	5,632	5,605
New Homes Bonus	723	519	192	-	-
RSG/Service/Funding Guarantee	219	471	840	897	793
NDR Multiplier	0	340	375	386	393
NDR	2,422	6,960	7,225	2,710	2,753
Net Revenue Stream	8,148	13,276	13,787	9,625	9,544
Ratio	-5.31%	-7.84%	-4.60%	-3.51%	-2.09%

Agenda Item No 12

Executive Board

12 February 2024

**Report of the Interim
Corporate Director – Resources (Section
151 Officer)**

**General Fund Revenue Estimates
Summary – 2023/24 Revised and
Tax Set 2024/25**

1 Summary

- 1.1 This report presents the General Fund revenue estimates for revised 2023/24 and original 2024/25 as presented to the individual boards and the overall Tax Set Summary for 2024/25 along with the recommendations to support the figures presented.

Recommendation to the Council

- a The revised budget for 2023/24, as set out in Appendices A & B;**
- b The revenues estimates for 2024/25, in Appendices A & B;**
- c To note the Council Tax base for 2024/25, in Appendix C;**
- d To approve a Council Tax increase of 2.99% £6.84 per annum (13p per week) on a Band D property for 2024/25;**
- e To approve the transfer of £2,611,310 from the Business Rates Fluctuation Reserve to fund the vehicles capital programme from 2023/24 to 2027/28;**
- f To approve minimum general fund balances of £1.2m as risk assessed by the Section 151 Officer, in Appendix E;**
- g To approve a review of the revenue and capital specific reserve funds; and**
- h To approve preparation of the Council Tax resolution for consideration by the Council using the recommendations agreed by this board.**

2 The Council's Budget Requirement

- 2.1 This report summarises all Board budgets which have been presented to members of each individual board and looks at the overall expenditure requirements of the Council. It should be noted that the Executive Board figures are in a separate report on this agenda and Planning and Development Board are considering their figures on 5 February after this report was published, so

these figures could alter. In addition, further minor variations could be made to these forecasts before the final version for approval at Executive Board and Council, to reflect any further changes that may be needed as circumstances continue to evolve.

The final figures presented to Council will include the final settlement figures and all of the parish precepts.

3 The Council's Budget Requirement

3.1 The Council's budget requirements are summarised below. Details of individual Board requirements are shown in Appendix A.

	Approved Budget 2023/24	Revised Budget 2023/24	Original Estimate 2024/25
Community & Environment	7,369,240	7,330,270	7,686,370
Planning & Development	320,280	395,570	293,250
Resources	3,227,670	3,521,790	3,845,750
Executive	655,330	574,310	568,620
Licensing	45,290	48,480	56,370
Net Service Expenditure	11,617,810	11,870,420	12,450,360
Invest to Save Initiatives	0	0	1,000,000
Use of Earmarked Reserves	(40,000)	(40,000)	0
Contingencies	257,430	146,870	(51,300)
Financing Adjustment	(766,420)	(1,006,210)	(780,570)
Investment Interest Income	(1,000,000)	(1,300,000)	(1,000,000)
Investment Income – MRF	(160,000)	0	(94,030)
Net Expenditure Requirement	9,908,820	9,671,080	11,524,460

3.2 The figures in this table are also summarised in Appendix B along with the external funding figures.

4 The Council's 2023/24 Estimated out-turn

4.1 The Council's revised net expenditure requirement for 2023/24 amounts to £9,671,080 which is £ 237,740 less than the approved estimate. The major changes in Board expenditure are set out below.

4.2 Leisure & Community - Premises costs have decreased by £175,420 of which £137,870 is due to lower-than-expected utility costs at the leisure centres, combined with the effect of original budgeting based on exceptionally high unit pricing as advised by ESPO. Supplies and Services costs have increased by £106,460 this is due largely to increased costs relating to play equipment and chemicals. Overall income has increased by £213,460 of which £198,000 is due to one-off grant received by Atherstone leisure centre to help with the costs of utilities and chemicals.

- 4.3 Streetscape - Employee costs have increased by £96,810 mainly due to the pay award settlement being above the budgeted rate, plus the use of agency staffing to cover staff absences. Supplies and Services expenditure has increased by £215,000 in the revised budget but reduced back for 2024/25. This is largely due to the delays in gaining the financial benefits from the new recycling facility. It's important to note that the full year cost in 2022/23 was £675,000 for disposal under the old arrangements, the full year budget for 2024/25 with the Sherbourne Recycling Facility is £455,000 - a significant reduction. It was anticipated that the council would receive a basket receipt in the order of £174,000 in 23/24. It is now acknowledged that this is unlikely to materialise in this financial year. We have been assured that the basket receipt is on track to deliver the 2024/25 target. The plant is now fully commissioned and operational.
- 4.4 The housing general fund services including homelessness have increased employee costs by £88,820 due to the additional staff employed to deal with the Government schemes such as Ukraine asylum seekers, these costs are funded by Government and show income to negate the overall impact.
- 4.5 Housing Benefits - The increase in miscellaneous expenditure is largely due to the reduced recovery of rent allowance and rent rebates overpayments, as recovery was put on hold during the pandemic. Recovery work is now underway, but only a part year's recovery has been undertaken and therefore the impact will not be reflected in the figures.
- 4.6 Corporate and Democratic Core - Additional costs above budget have incurred totalling £129,180 for partner contributions towards Sherbourne recycling facility company valuation report, plus the additional external audit fees.
- 4.7 There is a reduction of £60,190 in the Executive Board supplies and services due to lower professional fees on the North Warwickshire Development Plan.
- 4.8 Increases in the bank base rate during the year have led to improved interest rates available for investments, enabling additional investment income of £300,000 however this can be partly offset with the delay in interest payments from the Loan to Sherbourne MRF.
- 4.9 Financing of capital has reduced as the vehicles are being funded from a transfer from the Business rates revenue reserve fund.

5 The Council's 2024/25 Expenditure Requirement

- 5.1 The Council's net expenditure requirement for 2024/25 amounts to £11,524,460, which is £1,853,380 more than the revised estimate. The £1m for invest to save initiatives is included to fund projects which will deliver future reductions/increased income as part of the MTFs. The other main variations between the 2024/25 original budget and the 2023/24 revised budget are set out below.

- 5.2 Leisure & Community - Employee costs have increased by £206,000 due to pay award, increments and associated costs for employers' oncosts. Premises costs have increased by £67,350 mainly due to inflationary increases. Overall income has gone down by £135,130 made up of the £198,000 grant for Atherstone leisure centre being removed in 2024/25 budgets, and an increase of £28,540 income across all the leisure centres.
- 5.3 Streetscape - Employee costs have increased by £276,700 largely due to effect of pay award and increments. Additional funding has been included for covering absences and vacancies as these services are frontline and therefore the appropriate level of staffing needs to be always maintained to ensure the service can be delivered. Supplies and Services expenditure has reduced by £366,520 primarily due to the full year impact of the new Sherbourne Materials Recycling facility. Transport expenditure has increased by £34,550 due to inflation on vehicle costs.
- 5.4 Non-Domestic Rates and Council Tax Collection has increased by £152,030 due to inflation on supplies and services, and revisions to support costs including pay awards.
- 5.5 Housing Services – Homelessness this increase is due to a reduction in the income. A number of the costs are funded from Government schemes and the expenditure is balanced by the income, but the net difference is a loss of income £53,700. In addition, there is an increase cost with Private Sector Housing Assistance of £55,500 due to loss of contribution from of Warwickshire County Council.
- 5.6 The planning fee budget is set at the higher rate due to the new price increases set by the central government, despite the reduction in income in last year the fee increase at 35% from December 2023 has had a positive impact on income in next years budget.
- 5.7 Central Support charges have increased across the services as the majority of these costs are salary related, they have increased by the 4% pay award.

6 **Budget Projections**

- 6.1 In addition to preparing the 2024/25 budget, the three following years have been forecast.
- 6.2 Specific areas of increase are considered separately and individual rates of increase used to reflect prevailing market conditions, where they are significantly different to the general rate of inflation. These are assessed on an annual basis and depending on economic conditions, may include:
- Employee costs – pay awards and pension costs;
 - fuel and energy costs;
 - investment rates.
 - income

- 6.3 The pay award for the current financial year was approved on 1 November 2023 at 3.88% which will be backdated to 1st April. The figures in the plan assume a pay award of 4% in 2024/25, reducing to 3% for the following 3 years. This is the largest element of expenditure and will have a significant impact on the Council's budgets.
- 6.4 The revenue implications of the proposed capital programme, covered in a separate report on the agenda, have been included for all years.
- 6.5 The forecast has been summarised and is shown below.

	2024/25 £000	2025/26 £000	2026/27 £000	2027/28 £000
Net Expenditure Requirement	11,524,460	11,083,246	11,087,768	10,487,634

7 Summary of the 2024/25 Finance Settlement

- 7.1 The Government's calculation of an authority's Core Spending Power includes the Settlement Funding Assessment, together with an assumed level of council tax and some other grant income. The Settlement Funding Assessment is made up of two elements: Revenue Support Grant (RSG) and Business Rates (NDR).
- 7.2 An authority's settlement funding assessment is added to their Council Tax and then reduced by a given percentage to keep within the national control total. From this total the Council's Business Rates baseline and Council Tax income are deducted to arrive at the level of RSG. In years where an authority's entitlement to RSG is zero, increases to business rate tariffs were planned in order to reduce the amount of income retained by an authority.
- 7.3 The figures presented are still the provisional settlement, they will be updated for the final figures as part of the updated report to Council. The Government announced on 24 January 2024 that there will be additional funding in the final figures for 2024/25. The majority of this funding will go to Counties and Unitaries for social services but LG futures have estimated potentially an additional £83,000 funding guarantee allocation, this will not be included until the final figures are available. Based on provisional settlement figures:

	2023/24 £'000	2024/25 £'000
NDR Baseline Funding	1,993	2,106
RSG	81	86
Sub-total - SFA	2,074	2,192
Assumed Council Tax	4,984	5,196
S31 Grant – Business rates multiplier	340	375
New Homes Bonus	519	192
Lower tier Grant	-	-
Services Grant	75	12
Funding Guarantee Grant	315	742
Total Core Spending Power	8,307	8,709

- 7.4 The Government's calculation of core spending power assumes that all District Councils will increase their Band D Council Tax in line with the referendum limit for 2024/25, by whichever is the greater of £5 or 3%. No information around potential Council Tax increases from 2024/25 onwards is currently available.
- 7.5 Notification of New Homes Bonus of £192,000 has been received for 2024/25. This a one-year allocation and is significantly lower than in 2023/24 which is due to the impact the economic climate is having on house building in the Borough. As the New Homes Bonus scheme is being withdrawn and no indications around a potential alternative have yet been provided, no income has been assumed for 2025/26 onwards.
- 7.6 The minimum Funding Guarantee was new in the 2023/24 settlement and has continued for 2024/25. It has been assumed that the Funding Guarantee funding streams will not continue from 2025/26 as the funding review will reset the funding streams and business rates baseline.
- 7.7 The settlement provided only limited indications of funding after 2024/25. Whilst overall resources for local government have increased, individual allocations are uncertain, due to the lack of progress on the Fair Funding Review and Business Rates reset. The reset is still assumed for 2025/26 as the Government have not changed the date, although it is looking more uncertain with a general election in the current year which will impact on timescales.

8 Council Tax

- 8.1 As part of the budget setting process, the tax base for the Borough is updated each year to reflect new properties, demolitions and changes to the valuation bands of existing properties. Allowances are also made for properties which are exempt from Council Tax, or where the residents receive discounts. The tax base has been updated for 2024/25 and is attached as Appendix C.
- 8.2 A review of potential new build in the tax base has taken place, along with a review of exemptions and discounts. Balancing the growth in properties against an expected increase in exemptions and discounts, a low growth rate of 0.38% in the tax base has been used in projecting Council Tax income for 2024/25, which is based on the housing building in the Borough. The economic climate with cost of living and high interest rates has really impacted on house building as this can be seen in the growth projections for next year, 1% has been assumed for 2025/26 and then 1.5% assumed each year after as it is hoped with inflation reducing and in turn interest rates potentially going down the house building will start again.
- 8.3 The Authority has estimated the Council Tax position that will be brought forward from 2023/24, which is an expected deficit. All major precepting authorities have been notified of the amounts they will receive. North Warwickshire Borough Council will pay a sum of £13,480 for 2024/25.
- 8.4 In general terms, an inflationary increase in Council Tax is built into the budget on an annual basis. Given the significant pressure on the Council's budget, this

budget forecast has used a permitted increase of 2.99% in 2024/25 and has assumed a further 2.99% increase each year in subsequent years.

- 8.5 A Council Tax increase of 2.99% per annum for ratepayers gives the Council an additional £149,584 in income in 2024/25. It increases the Band D council tax by £6.84 per annum (13p per week) The Council could choose to opt for a different Council Tax increase; however, a lower tax increase would not be sustainable. Previous decisions to freeze Council Tax have had an ongoing and cumulative effect on the Council's financial position, reducing council tax income by around £1 million per annum. The table below illustrates the loss of revenue if the tax does not increase for 2024/25 and in line with the assumptions in the MTFs. This decision would have a cumulative impact of £1.6m.

Year	Tax Base	2.99% Increase	Council Tax Income £	0% Increase	Council Tax Income £	Loss of Income £
2024/25	21,869.06	235.70	5,154,537	228.86	5,004,953	149,584
2025/26	22,087.75	242.75	5,361,801	228.86	5,055,003	306,799
2026/27	22,419.07	250.01	5,604,991	228.86	5,130,828	474,163
2027/28	22,755.35	257.48	5,859,048	228.86	5,207,790	651,258
TOTAL			21,980,378		20,398,573	1,581,805

- 8.6 The Government wants to ensure that Council Taxpayers are protected against authorities that impose excessive Council Tax rises. A referendum will be required for any District/Borough that proposes a Council Tax increase over 2.99%.

9 Expected Resources

- 9.1 Expected Resources from the sources covered above are set out in the table below:

Funding	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28
Council Tax	(5,155)	(5,362)	(5,605)	(5,859)
National Non Domestic Rates (NDR) – Baseline	(2,106)	(2,710)	(2,753)	(2,808)
NDR – Gain estimated above baseline	(5,119)	0	0	0
Section 31 Grant – business rate multiplier	(375)	0	0	0
Revenue Support Grant (RSG)	(86)	(89)	(90)	(92)
New Homes Bonus	(192)	0	0	0
Lower Tier Grant	0	0	0	0
Services Grant	(12)	(59)	(59)	(59)
Funding Guarantee Grant	(742)	0	0	0
Collection Fund (Surplus)/Deficit	13	(25)	(27)	(29)
TOTAL	(13,774)	(8,245)	(8,534)	(8,847)

Note: The figures are based on Business Rates reset being in 2025/26.

9.2 The figures are based on the Government finally implementing business rates reset with no transitional arrangements in 2025/26, which as illustrated by the table above has a significant impact on income for this Council. It is possible with the election this year that reset will be pushed out to 2026/27 but at this stage the Government have not updated their guidance therefore the assumption has not been changed within the medium term projections.

10 Reductions and Increased Income

10.1 To deliver a medium term sustainable budget reductions are required from 2025/26 onwards and therefore it is essential that this Council adopts a strategy of a managed use of balances to ensure the projects/initiatives to deliver reductions/increased income can be developed and implemented but the budget is still balanced, see Appendix D and the Balancing the Medium Term Budget table;

	2023/24 Estimate £000	2024/25 Estimate £000	2025/26 Estimate £000	2026/27 Estimate £000	2027/28 Estimate £000
Net Service Expenditure	9,909	10,524	11,583	11,588	11,488
Invest to Save Fund	0	1,000	0	0	0
	0	0	-500	-500	-1,000
Total Expenditure	9,671	11,524	11,583	11,588	11,488
Total Income	13,350	13,774	8,245	8,534	8,847
Reductions/Increased Income Target		0	500	500	1,000
Net Expenditure	-3,679	-2,250	2,838	2,554	1,641
Use of/ (Contribution to)Balances	-3,679	-2,250	2,838	2,554	1,641
Balances at the Year End	-6,065	-8,315	-5,477	-2,923	-1,282

10.2 Members approved the strategy to delivering a balanced medium budget, as detailed in the Table a programme for Reductions/Increased Income over the medium term will need to be developed to deliver the target figures. Listed below is the initial list of projects:

- Transformation projects – New IT systems improved efficiency
- Invest to save – Asset Management
- Service redesign – Waste & Recycling Service
- Income Generation – Fees and Charges review, Rent review
- Commercialism – Leisure Services, Housing Development
- Structure Fit for Purpose – sustainable structure to deliver corporate plan priorities and excellent service to customers.
- Treasury Management – Review Investments.
- Agree tax rise strategy
- Review specific reserve funds – release funding for specific projects such as Asset Management and increase general balances.

In order to keep the level of balances at the minimum level of £1.2m, reductions/increased income of £500,000 is required for 2025/26, a further £500,000 for 2026/27 and an additional £1m in 2027/28.

11 Risks to the Council's Financial Position

- 11.1 As with all types of forecasting, there are certain inherent risks that may affect the financial position of the Council over the forthcoming periods. These risks require that the Council maintains a sufficient level of general reserves. The individual estimate reports to each Board have included a range of potential risks that could impact upon the budgetary position of services. In addition to these specific service risks, there are a number of risks that could impact more generally on the Council's financial position. The major risks to the Council's budget are highlighted below.
- 11.2 **Business Rates** - the Council has risks it cannot currently quantify, around the retention of business rates in place of revenue support grant and the impact of appeals against valuations. We currently anticipate collecting more business rates than assumed in our baseline funding level. This means that we will retain a proportion of any additional rates collected.
- 11.3 Projections include significant income above baseline for 2023/24 and 2024/25. Plans to reset business rates have been delayed but are still expected, and this could remove the growth mentioned above. In this event, the Volatility Reserve will be used to provide an additional funding to prevent an immediate revenue impact.
- 11.4 Any major changes to the Council's tax base through successful appeals, or removal of premises from the rating list over and above those allowed for, could impact on the additional rating income figures mentioned above. Given the increased valuations resulting from the 2022 valuation and the current economic uncertainty, this risk has increased.
- 11.6 **Fair Funding Review** – a national review is planned, which may adversely change the assumed spending need of the council, and therefore the level of government support that is received.
- 11.7 **New Homes Bonus scheme** – although a scheme for 2024/25 has been announced, there is no detail for further years. The indications seem to be that if it continues, funding will be allocated using a different mechanism.
- 11.8 **Growth in the Borough** – currently the growth has slowed down, however if new homes and estates are delivered in line with expectations in future years, there will be a significant impact on some Council services, for example, refuse and recycling and grounds maintenance.
- 11.9 **Other Risks** – the current economic position could increase demand for services such as benefits and homelessness could increase, whilst reducing demand in income generating areas. Unexpected changes in the remuneration of the workforce could impact on the financial position, as could any significant

loss of employees which required additional resources to complete statutory functions.

11.10 An overall risk assessment for 2024/25 has been completed to determine the minimum level of general reserves that the Section 151 Officer considers it is appropriate for the Authority to hold, and this is shown in Appendix E. This is based on the expected or 'most likely' position and the assumption that not all risks will occur within the next year.

11.11 As can be seen, the balance between future risks and the adequacy of general reserves held by the Council is a key part in establishing a medium-term financial strategy. Provided that expenditure is reduced in line with the targets identified, the level of balances is expected to remain around £1.2 million over the next four years, although careful monitoring of this will still be necessary.

11.12 As already mentioned, there is the potential for the Council to benefit from any additional rates collected, but there is also the risk that if rating income falls, there will be a direct impact on the Council's finances. There is a lot of uncertainty around the collection of business rates and the impact of appeals and refunds.

11.13 However, if a general reserve of £1.2 million is held, it is felt that this amount, together with other provisions, reserves and balances held by the Council, is adequate to protect the Council's financial position for both the forthcoming year and in the medium-term.

11.14 Although not all risks are likely to occur in 2024/25, there is a real possibility that the position could be worse than that anticipated. It could also be better. The Authority would need to adjust its financial strategy, and manage any changes required in 2024/25. Budgets are monitored throughout the year, with the budgetary position reported to Boards on a regular basis, so the Authority is in a good position to identify risks as they occur.

12 Availability of Reserves

12.1 The Local Government Act 2003 requires the Section 151 Officer to make an annual statement on the adequacy of financial reserves. General reserves or balances are held to provide a general contingency for unavoidable or unforeseen expenditure, and also give stability for longer term planning. The level of general reserves held is based on an assessment of the financial risks attached to the budget, and this is covered in section 11.

12.2 In addition to its general financial reserves, the Council holds a number of earmarked reserves, for both revenue and capital purposes. It also holds some reserves on behalf of other organisations.

12.3 General Council policy has been not to use earmarked reserves to fund ongoing service activity, so that the base budget position is not understated. An exception to this was made with regards to the pandemic and has also been needed in 2022/23 due to the significant pressures brought about by the current economic position. However, going forward, further use will not be assumed. So, for example, external grant received in advance for specific projects will be

held in an earmarked reserve until the activity takes place and the grant is spent. Timing differences on particular activities will also be dealt with through earmarked reserves, to remove unnecessary fluctuations in the base budget, whilst ensuring sufficient budget provision is available.

- 12.4 The Council will use earmarked reserves to set aside funding for capital schemes and projects. The Business Rate Volatility Reserve has been used to fund the capital vehicle replacement programme over the next 3 years.
- 12.5 Where earmarked reserves are used for revenue activities, the expenditure is included within the appropriate service budget, together with the contribution from the reserve to offset this. These movements are highlighted in the budget reports considered by Members.
- 12.6 The expected position on earmarked reserves at the end of 2023/24 relating to the General Fund is outlined below. A new reserve for the fluctuations in the price of recyclables has been approved as part of this budget process, £250,000 is approved from the Business Rates fund.

Earmarked Reserves	Expected Balance 31 March 2024 £000
Capital	4.878
Revenue	14.920
Total	19.798

Some of the reserves set aside for capital are for specific equipment replacement and are not yet due to be spent.

- 12.7 For the majority of earmarked reserves, there is little or no risk to the financial standing of the Council. Reserves set up to manage timing differences or hold funding received in advance match expenditure to the income available. Reserves held to allow risks to the base budget to be managed are estimated using the best available information. A review of earmarked reserves is planned, so that previous priorities can be reassessed in light of the current financial position and if the fund is no longer required the balance will be transferred to the general fund balance.

13 **Budget Consultation**

- 13.1 The residents survey completed in Dec/Jan included financial questions and is detailed in a separate report on this agenda.

14 **Council Tax Resolution**

- 14.1 A Council Tax resolution will be prepared for consideration at the Council Meeting, using the recommendations agreed by this Board and final figures for the settlement and parish precepts.

15 **Delivering Value for Money**

15.1 All Councils will be looking for reductions/increased income in net expenditure within their MTFs, to sustain their financial position. Efficiencies will be introduced wherever possible to minimise the impact on service provision.

16 **Conclusion**

16.1 It is clear that even with Council Tax increases of 2.99%, there is an imperative need to reduce the net expenditure of the Council. Reductions of around £2.0m over the period of the MTFs. However, if these expenditure reductions can be achieved, current forecasts indicate that reserves will remain around the minimal acceptable level of £1.2 million by the end of 2027/28, although this is subject to the uncertainties inherent in budgetary forecasting, and subject to the level of Council Tax increase agreed.

16.2 There are a number of factors that could affect these forecasts. The major factors are set out in section 11. In addition:

- The Council may struggle to deliver the necessary reductions in the required timeframe.
- The General Fund currently has no external borrowing. However, there is an underlying borrowing requirement, which may increase costs in the future.
- The ability to earn income from investments is expected to increase significantly, particularly in the short term. This has been taken into account in the budget forecast, along with assumptions on future movements. Any difference in actual experience will affect the financial projections; this could be beneficial or detrimental and will be reliant on how the economy performs.

16.3 The options available to the Council to meet these future pressures are restricted: increases in Government funding, higher increases in Council Tax (subject to a referendum) and reductions in service costs. As service delivery pressures increase, the options for reducing expenditure whilst maintaining existing service levels decrease.

17 **Report Implications**

17.1 **Financial Implications**

17.1.1 As detailed in the body of the report.

17.2 **Legal Implications**

17.2.1 As referred to at section 12 above, the Section 151 Officer has a statutory duty to prepare a report to the council including information about the robustness of the estimates provided for calculating the budget and the adequacy of proposed financial reserves. In turn, the legislation concerned requires the Council to have regard to the content of the report when making the budget calculations concerned.

17.3 **Safer Communities Implications**

17.3.1 The Council provides services and takes part in initiatives that work to improve Crime and Disorder levels within the Borough, and provision is included within the budgets for this.

17.4 **Environment and Sustainability Implications**

17.4.1 The financial strategy is linked to the delivery of targets and actions identified in the Corporate Plan and service plans. Continuing the budget strategy will allow the Council to manage its expected shortfall in resources without disruption of these targets and without disrupting essential services.

17.4.2 Parts of the corporate and service plans directly support the climate change agenda, for example, recycling and the green space strategy.

17.5 **Equality Implications**

17.5.1 Equality Assessments should be undertaken when making financial decisions to determine what the adverse impact on individuals or communities will be.

The Contact Officer for this report is Alison Turner (719234).

Background Papers

Local Government Act 1972 Section 100D, as substituted by the Local Government Act, 2000 Section 97

Background Paper No	Author	Nature of Background Paper	Date

Community & Environment Board: Total

	Approved Budget 2023/2024 £	Revised Budget 2023/2024 £	Original Budget 2024/2025 £
Employee Costs	4,597,520	4,677,480	5,190,750
Premises Related	1,123,100	946,670	1,015,620
Supplies and Services	1,794,220	2,215,470	1,709,020
Transport	746,880	718,950	754,120
Miscellaneous Expenditure	1,320	820	840
Earmarked Reserves	(3,420)	(34,560)	1,350
Gross Expenditure	8,259,620	8,524,830	8,671,700
Income	(3,373,870)	(3,677,540)	(3,437,640)
Net Controllable Expenditure	4,885,750	4,847,290	5,234,060
Departmental Support	838,170	838,170	765,840
Central Support	755,560	755,050	796,710
Capital Charges	889,760	889,760	889,760
Net Expenditure	7,369,240	7,330,270	7,686,370

Executive Board: Total

	Approved Budget 2023/2024 £	Revised Budget 2023/2024 £	Original Budget 2024/2025 £
Employee Costs	281,820	272,570	240,790
Premises Related	430	430	450
Supplies and Services	133,500	75,040	133,190
Transport	-	-	-
Miscellaneous Expenditure	-	-	-
Earmarked Reserves	(5,000)	(21,370)	(21,370)
Gross Expenditure	410,750	326,670	353,060
Income	(3,060)	-	-
Net Controllable Expenditure	407,690	326,670	353,060
Departmental Support	145,500	145,500	127,170
Central Support	102,140	102,140	88,390
Capital Charges	-	-	-
Net Expenditure	655,330	574,310	568,620

Licensing Board Alcohol & Gambling: Total

	Approved Budget 2023/2024 £	Revised Budget 2023/2024 £	Original Budget 2024/2025 £
Employee Costs	-	-	-
Premises Related	-	-	-
Supplies and Services	1,360	1,360	1,400
Transport	-	-	-
Miscellaneous Expenditure	-	-	-
Earmarked Reserves	-	-	-
Gross Expenditure	1,360	1,360	1,400
Income	(64,870)	(65,900)	(65,900)
Net Controllable Expenditure	(63,510)	(64,540)	(64,500)
Departmental Support	39,650	39,650	44,700
Central Support	6,170	6,170	3,740
Capital Charges	-	-	-
Net Expenditure	(17,690)	(18,720)	(16,060)

Licensing Board Taxi & General: Total

	Approved Budget 2023/2024 £	Revised Budget 2023/2024 £	Original Budget 2024/2025 £
Employee Costs	14,790	14,790	17,410
Premises Related	-	-	-
Supplies and Services	5,240	6,230	5,430
Transport	6,260	3,400	3,400
Miscellaneous Expenditure	-	-	-
Earmarked Reserves	-	-	-
Gross Expenditure	26,290	24,420	26,240
Income	(35,490)	(29,400)	(32,760)
Net Controllable Expenditure	(9,200)	(4,980)	(6,520)
Departmental Support	64,860	64,860	71,390
Central Support	7,320	7,320	7,560
Capital Charges	-	-	-
Net Expenditure	62,980	67,200	72,430

Planning & Development Board: Total

	Approved Budget 2023/2024 £	Revised Budget 2023/2024 £	Original Budget 2024/2025 £
Employee Costs	636,630	636,630	669,500
Premises Related	-	-	-
Supplies and Services	144,420	137,320	157,130
Transport	-	-	-
Miscellaneous Expenditure	-	-	-
Earmarked Reserves	-	-	-
Gross Expenditure	781,050	773,950	826,630
Income	(770,380)	(687,990)	(859,500)
Net Controllable Expenditure	10,670	85,960	(32,870)
Departmental Support	148,130	148,130	163,050
Central Support	145,090	145,090	146,680
Capital Charges	16,390	16,390	16,390
Net Expenditure	320,280	395,570	293,250

Resources (Recharged) Board: Total

	Approved Budget 2023/2024 £	Revised Budget 2023/2024 £	Original Budget 2024/2025 £
Employee Costs	8,772,700	8,750,570	9,225,760
Premises Related	686,360	686,230	630,340
Supplies and Services	1,059,670	1,058,990	1,301,580
Transport	713,210	755,600	732,690
Miscellaneous Expenditure	-	-	-
Earmarked Reserves	(46,920)	(46,920)	(41,500)
Gross Expenditure	11,185,020	11,204,470	11,848,870
Income	(250,490)	(250,490)	(242,160)
Net Controllable Expenditure	10,934,530	10,953,980	11,606,710
Recharged to Other Services	(13,146,490)	(13,165,940)	(13,946,590)
Departmental Support	30,320	30,320	32,250
Central Support	1,760,380	1,760,380	1,886,370
Capital Charges	421,260	421,260	421,260
Net Expenditure	-	-	-

Resources (Remaining) Board : Total

	Approved Budget 2023/2024 £	Revised Budget 2023/2024 £	Original Budget 2024/2025 £
Employee Costs	1,331,940	1,423,370	1,407,910
Premises Related	203,110	206,860	210,350
Supplies and Services	662,040	806,210	697,110
Transport	12,050	12,270	12,360
Miscellaneous Expenditure	8,597,930	8,664,370	8,675,600
Earmarked Reserves	(189,740)	(50,920)	(215,190)
Gross Expenditure	10,617,330	11,062,160	10,788,140
Income	(9,501,280)	(9,627,800)	(9,251,430)
Net Controllable Expenditure	1,116,050	1,434,360	1,536,710
Departmental Support	1,030,710	1,131,590	1,187,500
Central Support	851,420	851,420	1,036,930
Capital Charges	229,490	104,420	84,610
Net Expenditure	3,227,670	3,521,790	3,845,750

SUMMARY OF REVENUE REQUIREMENTS

Revised Budget

2023/2024 Gross Expenditure	2023/2024 Gross Income	2023/2024 Net Expenditure		2024/2025 Gross Expenditure	2024/2025 Gross Income	2024/2025 Net Expenditure
£	£	£		£	£	£
11,007,810	3,677,540	7,330,270	Community and Environment	11,124,010	3,437,640	7,686,370
1,083,560	687,990	395,570	Planning and Development	1,152,750	859,500	293,250
143,780	95,300	48,480	Licensing	155,030	98,660	56,370
13,500,080	9,878,290	3,621,790	Resources	13,139,340	9,493,590	3,645,750
574,310	-	574,310	Executive	568,620	-	568,620
13,338,790	13,338,790	-	Council Housing	14,152,870	14,152,870	-
46,870	-	46,870	Contingencies	148,700	-	148,700
-	-	-	Invest to Save	1,000,000	-	1,000,000
-	1,300,000	(1,300,000)	Interest on balances	-	1,094,030	(1,094,030)
-	1,046,210	(1,046,210)	Financing adjustment	-	780,570	(780,570)
39,695,200	30,024,120	9,671,080		41,441,320	29,916,860	11,524,460
3,678,930	-	3,678,930	Use of balances	2,248,600	-	2,248,600
43,374,130	30,024,120	13,350,010		41,441,320	29,916,860	13,773,060
1,188,554.08	-	1,188,554.08	Special items - Parish precepts	-	-	-
44,562,684.08	30,024,120	14,538,564.08		41,441,320	29,916,860	13,773,060
		(6,960,420)	Business Rates			(7,225,000)
		(339,580)	S31 Grant - Business Rate Multiplier			(375,000)
		(518,900)	New Homes Bonus			(192,000)
		(78,000)	Services Grant			(12,000)
		(312,000)	Funding Guarantee			(742,000)
		(80,840)	RSG			(86,000)
		(74,140)	(Surplus) / Deficit on Collection Fund			13,480
		6,174,684.08				5,154,540

APPENDIX D

UPDATED MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL FORECAST

	2023/24 Revised £000	2024/25 Estimate £000	2025/26 Estimate £000	2026/27 Estimate £000	2027/28 Estimate £000
Net Service Expenditure	11,977	13,399	13,020	13,388	13,705
Investment Income	(1,300)	(1,094)	(642)	(652)	(547)
Financing Adjustment	(1,006)	(781)	(795)	(648)	(670)
Requirement to reduce expenditure - 25/26	0	0	(500)	(500)	(500)
Requirement to reduce expenditure - 26/27	0	0	0	(500)	(500)
Requirement to reduce expenditure - 27/28	0	0	0		(1,000)
Net Expenditure	9,671	11,524	11,083	11,088	10,488
Council Tax	(4,986)	(5,155)	(5,362)	(5,605)	(5,859)
NDR - Baseline	(1,994)	(2,106)	(2,710)	(2,753)	(2,808)
NDR - Additional rates	(4,967)	(5,119)	0	0	0
Section 31 Grant - business rate multiplier	(340)	(375)	0	0	0
RSG	(81)	(86)	(89)	(90)	(92)
New Homes Bonus	(519)	(192)	0	0	0
Services Grant	(78)	(12)	(59)	(59)	(59)
Funding Guarantee Grant	(312)	(742)	0	0	0
Collection Fund (Surplus) / Deficit	(74)	13	(25)	(27)	(29)
Use of / (Contribution to) Balances	(3,679)	(2,249)	2,838	2,553	1,640
Balances at the Year End	(6,064)	(8,313)	(5,475)	(2,921)	(1,281)

COUNCIL WIDE - RISK ANALYSIS

	Likelihood	Provision
Income Generation – decrease in fees and charges of 10%	High	350,000
Lower vacancies than expected (provision for vacancies = £200k)	Medium	100,000
Investment Income – loss of cash flow 10%	Medium	100,000
Further Public Inquiries (potential £100k)	High	100,000
Housing Benefit – reduction in reimbursement	Low	50,000
Possibility of overspending the agreed budget	Medium	150,000
Housing Benefit – Local Authority error & overpayments	Medium	50,000
Increased cost of maintaining corporate buildings	Medium	50,000
General Contingency		250,000
Total		1,200,000

Likelihood of Risk

High	100%
Medium	50%
Low	0 –10%

Agenda Item No 13

Executive Board

12 February 2024

**Report of the Interim
Corporate Director (Resources)
(Section 151 Officer)**

Pay Policy Statement 2024/25

1 Summary

- 1.1 There is a requirement under Section 38 of the Localism Act 2011 for Councils to have and to publish a Pay Policy Statement, agreed by full Council, which will be subject to review at least annually. This report details the purpose for and the areas to be covered in the Pay Policy Statement.

Recommendation to Council

To adopt the Pay Policy Statement 2024/25.

2 Introduction

- 2.1 The purpose is to provide transparency by identifying
- The methods by which the salaries of all employees are determined;
 - The detail and level of remuneration of the Council's most senior staff.
- 2.2 The policy has been reviewed in line with the requirements and is attached at Appendix A.
- 2.3 Since the policy was adopted at Full Council on 4 July 2012, it has been reviewed and updated on an annual basis.

3 Report Implications

3.1 Human Resources Implications

- 3.1.1 As detailed in the report.

3.2 Links to Council's Priorities

- 3.2.1 This policy statement ensures that the Council meets its obligation under Section 38 of the Localism Act 2011 for Councils and therefore ensuring compliance with legislation.

The Contact Officer for this report is Alison Turner (719374).

Background Papers

Local Government Act 1972 Section 100D, as substituted by the Local Government Act,
2000 Section 97

Background Paper No	Author	Nature of Background Paper	Date

North Warwickshire Borough Council

PAY POLICY STATEMENT 2024/25

Introduction and Purpose

Under section 112 of the Local Government Act 1972, the Council has the “power to appoint officers on such reasonable terms and conditions as the Authority thinks fit”. This Pay Policy Statement (the ‘statement’) sets out the Councils approach to pay policy in accordance with the requirements of Section 38 of the Localism Act 2011. The purpose of the statement is to provide transparency with regard to the Council’s approach to setting the pay of its employees by identifying;

- the methods by which salaries of all employees are determined;
- the detail and level of remuneration of its most senior staff i.e. ‘chief officers’, as defined by the relevant legislation;
- the Group/Board responsible for ensuring the provisions set out in this statement are applied consistently throughout the Council and recommending any amendments to the full Council.

This policy statement is subject to review on a minimum of an annual basis in accordance with the relevant legislation prevailing at that time.

Legislative Framework

In determining the pay and remuneration of all of its employees, the Council will comply with all relevant employment legislation. This includes the Equality Act 2010, Part Time Employment (Prevention of Less Favourable Treatment) Regulations 2000, The Agency Workers Regulations 2010 and where relevant, the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Earnings) Regulations. With regard to the Equal Pay requirements contained within the Equality Act, the Council ensures there is no pay discrimination within its pay structures and that all pay differentials can be objectively justified through the use of equality proofed Job Evaluation mechanisms which directly relate salaries to the requirements, demands and responsibilities of the role.

Pay Structure

Based on the application of the Job Evaluation process, the Council uses the nationally negotiated pay spine as the basis for its local grading structure. This determines the salaries of the large majority of the workforce, together with the use of other nationally defined rates where relevant. The Council remains committed to adherence with national pay bargaining in respect of the national pay spine. No pay award has yet been agreed for 1 April 2024 onwards.

All other pay related allowances are the subject of either nationally or locally negotiated rates, having been determined from time to time in accordance with collective bargaining machinery and/or as determined by Council Policy. In determining its grading structure and setting remuneration levels for all posts, the Council takes account of the need to ensure value for money in respect of the use of public expenditure, balanced against the need to recruit and retain

employees who are able to meet the requirements of providing high quality services to the community, delivered effectively and efficiently and at times at which those services are required.

New appointments will normally be made at the minimum of the relevant grade, although this can be varied where necessary to secure the best candidate. From time to time, it may be necessary to take account of the external pay market in order to attract and retain employees with particular experience, skills and capacity. Where necessary, the Council will ensure the requirement for such is objectively justified by reference to clear and transparent evidence of relevant market comparators, using appropriate data sources available from within and outside the local government sector.

Senior Management Remuneration

For the purposes of this statement, senior management means 'chief officers' as defined within S43 of the Localism Act. The posts falling within the statutory definition are set out below, with details of their basic salary as at 31 January 2024;

- a) Chief Executive
The current salary of the post is £116,658. The salary falls within a range of four incremental points between £108,591 rising to a maximum of £116,658.
- b) Corporate Director (Resources)
The post is currently vacant. The salary falls within a range of four incremental points between £76,674 rising to a maximum of £82,287. The Corporate Director (Resources) is the Council's Section 151 Officer and this was included in the evaluation of the role.
- c) Corporate Director (Streetscape)
The post is currently vacant. The salary falls within a range of four incremental points between £74,018 rising to a maximum of £78,033.
- d) Directors
The salaries of posts designated as Directors fall within a range of four incremental points between £68,812 rising to a maximum of £73,866.

Chief Officers' roles are subject to job evaluation under the JNC Job Evaluation Scheme and are paid a salary, which is considered a market rate within districts in the local government sector.

Employment of Chief Officers is in accordance with collective agreements negotiated from time to time by the Joint Negotiating Committee for Chief Officers of Local Authorities for Local Government Services, those set out in the National Agreement on Pay and Conditions of Service (currently known as The Blue Book) and as supplemented by:-

- local collective agreements reached with trade unions recognised by the Council
- the rules of the Council

Recruitment of Chief Officers

When recruiting to all posts the Council will take full and proper account of its own Equal Opportunities, Recruitment, and Redeployment Policies. Where the Council is unable to recruit to a post at the designated grade, it will consider the use of temporary market forces supplements.

Where the Council remains unable to recruit Chief Officers under a contract of employment, or there is a need for interim support to provide cover for a vacant substantive Chief Officer post, the Council will, where necessary, consider and utilise engaging individuals under 'contracts for service'. These will be sourced through a relevant procurement process ensuring the Council is able to demonstrate the maximum value for money benefits from competition in securing the relevant service. The Council currently has one Chief Officer engaged under such arrangements.

Elected Members appoint all Chief Officers. The pay level offered, on recruitment is typically the bottom point of the salary grade. In situations, however, where the individual recruited has a high level of knowledge or skills, and/or previous relevant experience, a higher salary, up to the maximum salary for that post, may be authorised, by the Chief Executive and the Elected Member recruitment panel. The recruitment panel would authorise this for an appointment of a Chief Executive.

Additions to Salary of Chief Officers

The Council does not apply any bonuses or performance related pay to its Chief Officers.

In addition to basic salary, set out below are details of other elements of 'additional pay' which are chargeable to UK Income Tax and do not solely constitute reimbursement of expenses incurred in the fulfillment of duties;

- All Chief Officers were entitled to a lease car. Following consultation this was phased out by April 2015. There is some protection in that when the car was returned the Chief Officer received the 'spot value' less 10% as a travel allowance so long as he/she remains in the role. The 'spot value' depends on the officer's grade. The 'spot values' for each grade are detailed at Appendix 1.

Newly appointed Chief Officers will use their own vehicle, and receive an Essential User Allowance. Employees who are not Chief Officers may also receive the Essential User allowance. Essential User Allowances are also detailed at Appendix 1.

The Chief Executive is the Council's Returning Officer and the Electoral Registration Officer (who also manages the elections service) and receives an Election Allowance. The relevant bodies set this allowance. It varies each year depending on the number and type of elections in each year. There are the Police and Crime Commissioner election and a General election during 2024/25.

A Chief Officer may be awarded an honorarium when they 'act up' in a role. The Special Sub Group of Executive Board can authorise these. An honorarium either is a one off payment or can be a monthly allowance for a temporary period. The Council does not currently have any Chief Officers receiving an honorarium.

Payments on Termination

In the case of redundancy, a redundancy payment would be made to a Chief Officer in line with the Council's Retirement Policy & Procedure, and the Redundancy Policy & Procedure, which applies to all staff.

In the case of termination due to ill health, then there would be no termination payment but a higher pension benefit may be approved by the Warwickshire local government pension scheme. The pension benefit may include a lump sum in addition to an on-going pension payment.

On termination of employment, if it is not possible or desirable for the Chief Officer to serve their contractual or statutory notice period, then a payment may be made in lieu of the notice period not worked.

Any contractual payments such as outstanding annual leave are usually included in payments on termination of employment. Similarly, any monies owing to the Council would be deducted from payments made on termination.

The Council may choose to make a payment under a Settlement Agreement to protect against compensation claims that could be expensive or bring the Council into disrepute. The Special Sub Group of the Executive Board would approve any such payment.

Where a Section 151 Officer or Monitoring Officer cease carrying out these statutory roles, then the post would be re-evaluated to exclude these duties.

Increases to Pay

Any cost of living increases agreed through JNC are applied to Chief Officers pay. This is typically on 1st April each year.

Chief Officers appointed on a salary scale will receive an incremental increase to their pay as follows:

Chief Officers appointed between 1st October and 31st March will receive an increment after six months service.

Chief Officers appointed between 1st April and 30th September will receive an increment on the following 1st April.

Thereafter, all Chief Officers will receive increments annually on 1st April.

Chief Officers' pay will be measured against the market, normally on a three to five yearly basis, to ensure we maintain consistency with peer local authorities. Where there are significant changes in market rates then a pay benchmarking

assessment will be carried out for Chief Officers. The last full pay benchmarking on Chief Officers was completed in 2018 as part of the review of the senior management structure. Salary increases were made at this time to all Chief Officer posts, with the exception of the Chief Executive post. In October 2019, a pay benchmarking assessment was carried out on the revised Corporate Director role.

As a full pay benchmarking assessment was due during 2023/24, West Midlands Employers (WME) were approached in September 2023 to conduct a pay benchmarking assessment for the Chief Executive and Chief Officers posts. The analysis report received is currently being considered as part of a review of the senior management structure. The Council's Executive Board approves increases to Chief Officers pay.

Publication

Upon approval by the full Council, this statement will be published on the Councils Website. In addition, for posts where the full time equivalent salary is at least £50,000, the Councils Annual Statement of Accounts will include a note setting out the total amount of

- salary, fees or allowances paid to or receivable by the person in the current and previous year;
- any sums payable by way of expenses allowance that are chargeable to UK income tax;
- any compensation for loss of employment and any other payments connected with termination;
- any benefits received that do not fall within the above

This policy will be available on our website www.northwarks.gov.uk

Lowest Paid Employees

Our lowest paid employees' salary is determined by the grade for their post, which is underpinned by a job evaluation scheme, rather than being paid a market rate for their job. Market supplements are given to some posts where there are recruitment and retention difficulties. Currently none of our lowest paid employees receives a market supplement on their salary to bring it up to market rates.

Whilst we may employ apprentices on a lower wage, i.e. the minimum wage, during their apprenticeship they do have a structured training plan leading to a qualification.

With regard to other aspects of remuneration policy, there is equity across all our employees. The same policies set out above apply to our lowest paid employees.

Relationship Between Remuneration of our Chief Officers and Other Employees

Currently the average (mean) of our Chief Officers pay is 2.48 times that of the rest of our employees. Our top earning Chief Officer earns 3.92 times the mean of the rest of our employees.

Currently the average (mean) of our Chief Officers pay is 3.30 times that of our lowest paid employees. Our top earning Chief Officer earns 5.22 times the mean of our lowest paid employees.

Currently the median Chief Officers pay is 2.61 times that of the rest of our employees. Our top earning Chief Officer earns 4.13 times the median salary of the rest of our employees.

These figures are as at 31 January 2024 and do not include travel allowances or essential car user allowances.

Our policy for 2024/25 is to maintain Chief Officers pay within the following maximums:

Ratio of mean pay (Chief Officers: rest of employees) = 3.31

Ratio of median pay (Chief Officers: rest of employees) = 3.67

And not to exceed the following multipliers for our top earning Chief Officer:

5.5 X mean pay of other employees

5.5 X median pay of other employees

Accountability and Decision Making

In accordance with the Constitution of the Council, the Special Sub Group and the Executive Board are responsible for decision making in relation to the recruitment, pay, terms and conditions and severance arrangements in relation to employees of the Council.

RELATED DOCUMENTS

Retirement Policy & Procedure
Redundancy Policy & Procedure
Recruitment Policy
Disciplinary Procedure
JNC Job Evaluation Scheme Outline

Date of this review	February 2024
---------------------	---------------

Appendix 1

Annual Spot Value Less 10%

Chief Executive	£3,456
Corporate Director (Resources)	£3,456
Corporate Director (Streetscape)	£3,456
Directors	£3,456

Annual Essential Car User Allowance

451-999cc	£846
1000-1199cc	£963
1200cc & above	£1,239

Agenda Item No 14

Executive Board

12 February 2024

**Report of the Interim
Corporate Director – Resources (Section
151 Officer)**

**External Auditors Annual Report
2020/21**

1 Summary

- 1.1 This report presents the Annual Audit Report received from the Councils external, Ernst & Young LLP.

Recommendation to Council

That the report presented in Appendix A is noted.

2 Introduction

- 2.1 The Councils External Auditors, Ernst & Young LLP, have summarised the work undertaken as part of the audit of year ending 31 March 2021. The information contained in the report has already been presented to members of the Executive Board 27 November 2023. Therefore, the Annual Report attached at Appendix A is for note only.

3 Report Implications

3.1 Finance and Value for Money Implications

- 3.1.1 The external audit fees are within the Councils budget, as detailed in the report the fee was significantly more than the original quote due to a number of issues detailed in Appendix A on page 21 As detailed in the body of the report.

- 3.1.2 The report includes the auditors assessment of value for money achieved by the Council and there are no issues raised in the report.

3.2 Risk Management Implications

- 3.2.1 The External Audit process is essential to ensure that the Council has appropriate and robust assurance, governance and internal controls all of which are audited as part of the work completed by EY. The conclusions and recommendations from this work are presented to officers and members for approval to ensure any areas for improvement are addressed.

The Contact Officer for this report is Alison Turner (719374).

Background Papers

Local Government Act 1972 Section 100D, as substituted by the Local Government Act, 2000 Section 97

Background Paper No	Author	Nature of Background Paper	Date

Appendix

**North Warwickshire
Borough Council
Auditor's Annual
Report**

Year ended 31 March 2021

Contents

01 Introduction



02 Audit of the financial statements



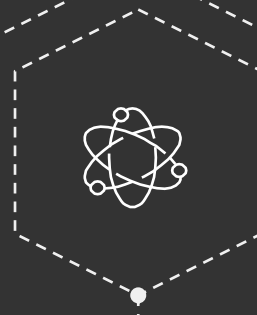
03 Value for Money



04 Appendix A - VfM - Summary of arrangements



05 Appendix B - Fees



Public Sector Audit Appointments Ltd (PSAA) issued the "Statement of Responsibilities of Auditors and audited bodies". It is available from the PSAA website (<https://www.psa.co.uk/audit-quality/statement-of-responsibilities/>). The Statement of responsibilities serves as the formal terms of engagement between appointed auditors and audited bodies. It summarises where the different responsibilities of auditors and audited bodies begin and end, and what is to be expected of the audited body in certain areas.

The "Terms of Appointment and further guidance (updated July 2021)" issued by the PSAA sets out additional requirements that auditors must comply with, over and above those set out in the National Audit Office Code of Audit Practice (the Code) and in legislation and covers matters of practice and procedure which are recurring.

This report is made solely to the Executive Board and management of North Warwickshire Borough Council in accordance with the statement of responsibilities. Our work has been undertaken so that we might state to the Executive Board and management of North Warwickshire Borough Council those matters we are required to state to them in this report and for no other purpose. To the fullest extent permitted by law, we do not accept or assume responsibility to anyone other than the Executive Board and management of North Warwickshire Borough Council for this report or for the opinions we have formed. It should not be provided to any third party without our prior written consent.



Section 1 - Introduction

Purpose

The purpose of the auditor's annual report is to bring together all of the auditor's work over the year. A core element of the report is the commentary on value for money (VFM) arrangements, which aims to draw to the attention of the Council, or the wider public, relevant issues, recommendations arising from the audit and follow-up of recommendations issued previously, along with the auditor's view as to whether they have been implemented satisfactorily.

Responsibilities of the appointed auditor

We have undertaken our 2020/21 audit work in accordance with the Audit Plan that we previously issued. We have complied with the National Audit Office's (NAO) 2020 Code of Audit Practice, other guidance issued by the NAO, and International Standards on Auditing (UK).

As auditors, we are responsible for:

Expressing an opinion on:

- The 2020/21 financial statements;
- Conclusions relating to going concern; and
- The consistency of other information published with the financial statements, including the narrative statement.

Reporting by exception:

- If the governance statement does not comply with relevant guidance or is not consistent with our understanding of the Council;
- If we identify a significant weakness in the Council's arrangements in place to secure economy, efficiency, and effectiveness in its use of resources; and
- Any significant matters that are in the public interest.

Responsibilities of the Council

The Council is responsible for preparing and publishing its financial statements, narrative statement, and annual governance statement. It is also responsible for putting in place proper arrangements to secure economy, efficiency, and effectiveness in its use of resources.



Section 1 - Introduction (continued)

2020/21 Conclusions

Financial statements	Unqualified - the financial statements give a true and fair view of the financial position of the Council as at 31 March 2021 and of its expenditure and income for the year then ended. We issued our auditors report on 28 th November 2023.
Going concern	We have concluded that the Director - Corporate Service's use of the going concern basis of accounting in the preparation of the financial statements is appropriate.
Consistency of the other information published with the financial statement	Financial information in the narrative statement and published with the financial statements was consistent with the audited accounts.
Value for money (VFM)	We had no matters to report by exception on the Council's VFM arrangements. We have included our VFM commentary in Section 3 of this report.
Consistency of the annual governance statement	We were satisfied that the annual governance statement was consistent with our understanding of the Council.
Public interest report and other auditor powers	We had no reason to use our auditor powers.
Whole of government accounts	We have performed the procedures required by the National Audit Office (NAO) on the Whole of Government Accounts submission. We had no issues to report.
Certificate	We issued our certificate at the same time as the auditor's report and this report, and it is included as an appendix to this report.

Section 2 - Audit of the financial statements

Key findings

The Narrative Statement and Accounts is an essential tool for the Council to show how it has used public money and how it can demonstrate its financial management and financial health.

On 28th November 2023, we issued an unqualified opinion on the financial statements. We reported our detailed findings to the 27 November 2023 Executive Board meeting. We outline below the key issues identified as part of our audit, reported against the significant risks, and other areas of audit focus we included in our Audit Plan. We did not report any internal control recommendations and areas for improvement in the control environment in the Audit Results Report.

Significant risk

Conclusion

Misstatements due to fraud or error

Our work did not identify any material weaknesses in the design and operation of controls or evidence of material misstatements, whether due to fraud or error, related to the inappropriate capitalisation of revenue expenditure. Our work did not identify any instances of inappropriate judgements being applied.

Our work did not identify any other transactions during our audit which appeared unusual or outside the Council's normal course of business.

Risk of fraud in revenue and expenditure recognition

We did not identify any significant issues in relation to this risk area.

Valuation of Council Dwellings, Other land and buildings and Investment Property

Based on our procedures, we have identified the following errors:

Factual misstatement - £390k overstatement of investment properties;

Projected misstatement 1 - £708k overstatement of Property, Plant and Equipment; and

Projected misstatement 2 - (£404k) understatement of Property, Plant and Equipment

The net effect of the above two projected misstatements is £304k.

Management have indicated that the differences above are not material to the users of the financial statements and will not be making an adjustment for these given they are estimates. We had assessed the impact on the overall audit and have concluded that this does not have a material impact on the audit opinion.

Audit delays, working papers and responses to audit

The audit has been delayed for a number of reasons and there were issues with working papers and responses to audit due to Council staff capacity. We set out more detail in our Audit Results Report which was presented to the Executive Board on 27th November 2023.

We are pleased that we have managed to work through these issues with the Council, however they have resulted in significant additional audit work and we recommend that the Council ensures that it has sufficient resource in place to respond to future audits.



Section 3 - Value for Money

We did not identify any risks of significant weaknesses in the Council's VFM arrangements for 2020/21.

Our VFM commentary highlights relevant issues for the Council Authority and the wider public.

We have no matters to report by exception in the audit report.

Scope

We are required to report on whether the Council has put in place proper arrangements to secure economy, efficiency, and effectiveness in its use of resources. We have complied with the guidance issued to auditors in respect of their work on value for money arrangements (VFM) in the 2020 Code of Audit Practice (2020 Code) and Auditor Guidance Note 3 (AGN 03). We presented our VFM risk assessment to the 27 November 2023 Executive Board meeting, which was based on a combination of our cumulative audit knowledge and experience, our review of Council committee reports, meetings with the Finance Services Manager and Director of Corporate Services and evaluation of associated documentation through our regular engagement with Council management and the finance team.

Reporting

We completed our risk assessment procedures in August 2023 and did not identify any significant weaknesses in the Council's VFM arrangements. We have also not identified any significant risks during the course of our audit. As a result, we had no matters to report by exception in the audit report on the financial statements.

Our commentary for 2020/21 is set out in the following pages of this report. The commentary summarises our conclusions over the arrangements at the Council in relation to our reporting criteria (see below) throughout 2020/21. Appendix A includes the detailed arrangements and processes underpinning the reporting criteria.

In accordance with the NAO's 2020 Code, we are required to report a commentary against three specified reporting criteria as follows:

Reporting criteria	Risks of significant weaknesses in arrangements identified?	Actual significant weaknesses in arrangements identified?
Financial sustainability: How the Council plans and manages its resources to ensure it can continue to deliver its services	No significant risks were identified	No significant weaknesses were identified
Governance: How the Council ensures that it makes informed decisions and properly manages its risks	No significant risks were identified	No significant weaknesses were identified
Improving economy, efficiency and effectiveness: How the Council uses information about its costs and performance to improve the way it manages and delivers its services	No significant risks were identified	No significant weaknesses were identified



Section 3 - Value for Money (continued)

Financial Sustainability: How the Council plans and manages its resources to ensure it can continue to deliver its services

Through the development of the MTFS (Medium Term Financial Strategy) and the General Fund Budget, the Council conducts review meetings with its directors, including the management team, to identify any service-related pressures over the medium term. The MTFS provides the framework for revenue and capital spending decisions over a four-year period.

In the event of potentially significant changes to the Council's financial position being identified, the Corporate Director - Resources will assess whether there is a need for additional updates to the financial strategy.

Specifically for the Council's review of the 2019-2024 MTFS, pressures stemming from the COVID-19 impact were identified. Some include additional service costs, reduction in investment income, and increase in pay costs. These were incorporated into the medium-term plan and the budgets for the upcoming year.

The Council has also developed a budget sustainability programme to identify savings and efficiencies and income generation opportunities to help address future financial pressures and budget gaps. The savings target identified for the financial year 2020/21 was £800k. The actual level of savings achieved through the reduction in expenditure budgets or additional income totalled £789k. The Council achieved this by reviewing the budgeted spending across each service area and identifying savings through reducing the respective expenditure budgets or identifying additional income.

Budget monitoring is completed each month and is reported to Management. Demand data or key performance data support any budget variations, and this information is used as the starting point for the following year's budget. The Council produces an outturn report detailing FY 2020/21 financial performance and monitoring reports following the outbreak of COVID-19. The Council has also considered the ongoing implications of COVID-19 on future financial resilience and sustainability through reports on the budgets in the future and whether adequate reserves and balances are in place to support.

The Council closely monitors its finances with routine reports; the Resource Board reviews these and then with the Executive Board on a timely basis, and remedial action is taken when required to offset emerging budget pressures. All saving proposals are also regularly reviewed for deliverability and are risk-assessed by management throughout the year.

Conclusion: Based on the work performed, the Council had proper arrangements in place in 2020/21 to enable it to plan and manage its resources to ensure it can continue delivering its services.



Section 3 - Value for Money (continued)

Governance: How the Council ensures that it makes informed decisions and properly manages its risks

The Council operates using a committee system. This structure involves several Service Boards and Committees, each responsible for their specific areas of activity, ultimately reporting back to the full Council. This meeting cycle of Board and Council meetings typically runs five times throughout the year. The remit and responsibilities of the Boards and Committees are set out in the Constitution of the Council and include the Executive Board, the Resources Board, the Community and Environment Board, the Planning and Development Board, and the Licensing Committee. The Council ensures that those making decisions, whether for the Council or the partnership, are provided with information that is fit for the purpose - relevant, timely, and clearly explains technical issues and their implications. Also, the Council ensures that professional advice on matters with legal or financial implications is available and recorded well in advance of decision-making and used appropriately.

All key decisions taken are discussed with the Executive Board during these meetings. All decisions taken are recorded as minutes and posted on the Council's website for all to access. The Council has several ways that employees can raise concerns of any kind, Members of the Council or the public. These include confidential reporting arrangements and complaint procedures.

All reports presented to members have a straightforward review process to ensure directors sign off before finance reviews to ensure reports are appropriately scrutinised. When presented to members, all relevant documentation and information is included.

The Council maintains and regularly reviews its Strategic Risk Register and reports to its members for corrective actions. The strategic risk register shows the various risks facing the Council, its likelihood, impact, score, and the responsible officer. The risk management system of the Council involves an annual review of strategic risks by the Senior Management Team and an annual review by senior managers of operational risks in their service areas. This enables all Senior Managers to complete Annual Statements of Assurance and identify actions needed to manage risk in the coming year, including identifying new threats.

Conclusion: Based on the work performed, the Council had proper arrangements in place in 2020/21 to enable it to make informed decisions and properly manage its risks.



Section 3 - Value for Money (continued)

Improving economy, efficiency and effectiveness: How the Council uses information about its costs and performance to improve the way it manages and delivers its services

The Council Committees receive performance-based reports yearly to monitor performance continuously. The Annual Report and Governance Statement set out the performance review for the year. Additionally, the CIPFA resilience index is used to identify themes that the Council should consider concerning its financial sustainability and health.

The Narrative Report sets out a review of achievements against the corporate plan. Furthermore, services continually review performance, which is reported on the annual corporate performance and outturn report. In addition, all services use internal audit reports, external inspections, and formal and informal benchmarking.

The Corporate plans are approved before the start of each year and identify the headline targets for the coming year, which are supported by greater detail within individual service plans. Services are monitored and discussed monthly at extended management team meetings. All senior management team members contribute actively to cross-organizational issues and corporate decision-making to match resources to the authority's objectives. Usually, progress against corporate plan targets is generally reported to senior managers, management teams, and service boards quarterly, along with performance indicator information.

The monthly and quarterly performance monitoring process tracks progress against the Council's priorities and highlights any potential risks and issues in achieving these priorities. Performance management information about key objectives is regularly provided to the Executive Board. Variances are analysed and reasons are provided against each indicator, any resulting actions agreed are then put into place by the respective department responsible for the indications in question. Adverse indicator variances are dealt with promptly by the appropriate officer/service line head before reporting to Members.

Conclusion: Based on the work performed, the Council had proper arrangements in place in 2020/21 to use information about its costs and performance to improve how it manages and delivers services.

Appendices



EY

Building a better
working world

Appendix A - Summary of arrangements

Financial Sustainability

Reporting Sub-Criteria

How the body ensures that it identifies all the significant financial pressures that are relevant to its short and medium-term plans and builds these into them

Findings

Through the development of the MTFS (Medium-term Financial Strategy) and the General fund budget, the Council conducts review meetings with its directors and management team to identify any service-related pressures over the medium term for the authority. The MTFS provides the framework for revenue and capital spending decisions over four years. The MTFS is reviewed and updated annually to consider all significant changes in the financial environment.

Financial information is generally provided monthly to the Executive Management team from the respective departments and at least thrice a year to each Service Board. The boards would scrutinise the indicative financial performance against the forecasted information for all the Council's spending through periodic review of these financial reports. Given the pressures arising from the COVID-19 year, these financial updates were discussed much more regularly, with the output being that the MTFS was updated in September in line with the usual practice.

In the event of potentially significant changes to the Council's financial position, the Corporate Director - Resources will assess whether additional updates to the financial strategy are needed.

Specifically for the Council's review of the 2019-2024 MTFS, pressures stemming from the COVID-19 impact, such as additional service costs, reduction in investment income, and increase in pay costs, were identified and incorporated into the medium-term plan, and the budgets for the upcoming year.

How the body plans to bridge its funding gaps and identifies achievable savings

The Council has developed a budget sustainability programme to identify savings/efficiencies and income generation opportunities to help address future financial pressures and budget gaps. Increased efficiency, streamlining the provision of services and some income generation has enabled the impact on front line services to be minimised.

The MTFS was updated yearly due to the political turbulence around Brexit and the COVID-19 pandemic. The savings targets within the Strategy were also updated to reflect the expected funding and spending pressures. Within the review, the Council sought out opportunities for specific savings before setting the budget for the following year. The savings target identified for 2020/21 is £800k.

The actual level of savings achieved through the reduction in expenditure budgets or additional income totalled £789k.

The Council achieved this by reviewing the budgeted spending across each service area and identifying savings through reducing the respective expenditure budgets or identifying additional income.

Appendix A – Summary of arrangements

Financial Sustainability

Reporting Sub-Criteria

How the body plans finances to support the sustainable delivery of services in accordance with strategic and statutory priorities

Findings

The Council sets its budget in line with its corporate priorities to ensure that spending aligns with its priorities. The Council aims to establish a balanced budget. The current policy for the Council is to maintain a minimum working balance of £1.4 million in the General Fund Reserve. The risk assessments, which support these requirements, are updated annually as part of the budget process and included in the Corporate Plan.

The Corporate Plan set out the Council's seven priorities for achieving this Vision through engagement and partnership with local communities and businesses, the County, and the town. It also outlines the key actions to deliver on those priorities. In arriving at these priorities, external influences are considered, including the Local Strategic Partnership's (LSP) aims. Other factors, such as legislative changes and reward incentives, are also considered. The Corporate Plan and associated Financial Strategy are reviewed and updated annually before each new financial year starts.

One of the examples of a priority set by the Council is on responsible financial and resource management by identifying the resources needed to deliver the Council's plan to provide high-quality services to their communities and maximising their use by balancing the need to keep Council Tax and debt as low as possible. The Council set 13 targets with responsible officers in the corporate plan for 2020-21 in relation to responsible financial and resource management. Targets set include the following:

- To achieve the savings required by the Medium-Term Financial Strategy, including a £5 annual rise in Council Tax;
 - To continue to ensure that all debts due to the Council, wherever possible, are recovered efficiently in accordance with the Council's Corporate Debt Framework;
 - To review the Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme to ensure that it remains affordable and fit for purpose by December 2020; and
 - To ensure that the Council is prepared for emergencies and has suitable Emergency and Business Continuity Plans, as required by the Civil Contingencies Act, and to review both the Emergency and Business Continuity Plans, reporting quarterly to the Board.
-

Appendix A – Summary of arrangements

Financial Sustainability

Reporting Sub-Criteria

How the body ensures that its financial plan is consistent with other plans such as workforce, capital, investment, and other operational planning which may include working with other local public bodies as part of a wider system

Findings

All plans are developed and linked to corporate intends to ensure a golden thread. All plans with financial elements such as the capital strategy, capital programme, investment and other operating planning have revenue implications flow in the Summary of General Fund Revenue Estimates.

The Boards are presented with a Progress Report on the achievement of the Corporate Plan and Performance indicator targets, which show and track progress for each board over the quarters of the year and the direction of achievement of the target set.

These are all combined in a medium-term business and financial planning process to deliver the Council's strategic objectives. These objectives are:

- A 30-year Business Plan for the Council's housing stock to ensure ongoing viability, which is reviewed annually;
- A Medium-Term Financial Strategy to ensure sustainable finances for all other Council services, updated twice a year, in February and September;
- A Capital Strategy, which is updated annually;
- A 3-year capital programme and a 10-year capital projection are updated annually;
- A Treasury Management and Investment strategy, which is updated annually; and
- Monitoring process that enables this to be delivered.

As seen above, the process incorporates different plans across the Council into the financial planning process.

How the body identifies and manages risks to financial resilience, e.g. unplanned changes in demand, including challenge of the assumptions underlying its plans

The Council has a risk management strategy to manage all its risks, including financial ones. A risk management system has been established and operated by all services. This ensures that if there are significant changes in the level of risk to the Council from new legislation or policy changes, they are considered and reported to the Board. Therefore, any significant increase in financial troubles will be addressed during the year if necessary. In addition, the financial risks of individual services are considered during the budget preparation process by Service Boards, along with the related budgets.

Annual risk assessments are undertaken on the level of balances for the General Fund and the Housing Revenue Account and are considered simultaneously as the budgets. This ensures that all current issues are included. To highlight the impact of the potential risks, the significant risks are assessed on differing risk levels, which are included in reports to the Board.

Appendix A – Summary of arrangements (continued)

Governance

Reporting Sub-Criteria

How the body monitors and assesses risk and how the body gains assurance over the effective operation of internal controls, including arrangements to prevent and detect fraud

Findings

Risk Management

The Council maintains and regularly reviews its Strategic Risk Register and reports to its members for corrective actions. The strategic risk register shows the various risks facing the Council, its likelihood, impact, score and the responsible officer. The risk management system of the Council involves an annual review of strategic risks by the Senior Management Team and an annual review by senior managers of operational risks in their service areas. This enables all Senior Managers to complete Annual Statements of Assurance and identify actions needed to manage risk in the coming year, including identifying new threats.

Internal Audit

The Council has in place its constitution, which details roles and responsibilities, rules and procedures for the Council and committees, including codes of conduct and protocols. North Warwickshire Borough Council has a professional Internal Audit service. It helps the Council accomplish its objectives by bringing a systematic, disciplined approach to evaluate and improve the effectiveness of risk management, control and governance processes.

Internal audit's work programme is set out in an Annual Risk Based Audit Plan. The plan is prepared in consultation with the Council's senior managers and is designed to ensure the highest-risk areas. The plan is approved annually by the Resources Board, which then receives regular progress reports on progress against the plan and a summary of the outcomes of internal audit's work.

Fraud

The Council has zero tolerance for all forms of fraud and corruption. It employs a counter-fraud officer who works closely with the Revenues, Benefits and Housing teams to identify, deter and prevent fraud. The Council has used the current Counter Fraud Officer since June 2018; this is a shared role with Nuneaton and Bedworth Borough Council (NBBC). On average, the Officer spends 40% of his time investigating fraud allegations at NWBC and 60% at NBBC. The Council also have a joint working agreement with the Department for Works and Pensions.

The Council has in place specific other mechanisms which help in the prevention and detection of fraud, such as an effective anti-fraud and corruption policy, Swift dealing by senior managers of those who attempt to defraud the Council, a register of interests maintained and promoted amongst members, and a whistleblowing policy is currently in place.

Appendix A – Summary of arrangements (continued)

Governance

Reporting Sub-Criteria

Findings

How the body approaches and carries out its annual budget setting process

The Council has comprehensive forecasting and budget procedures. A medium-term business and financial planning process delivers the authority's strategic objectives. It is updated twice a year in February and September. The Council also prepares a capital strategy, which is updated annually. The authority develops the medium-term financial framework, which shows the authority's financial strategy and projects forward the authority's General Fund budget each year. The budget process operates throughout the year. The financial forecast produced in September provides the context for the more detailed four-year budget approved in February as part of the Council Tax Setting process. In the event of potentially significant changes to the Council's financial position, the Corporate Director - Resources will assess whether additional updates to the financial strategy are needed.

Before the start of each financial year, the senior officers prepare estimates of income and expenditure on General Fund Revenue accounts in consultation with the Corporate Director - Resources for submission to the appropriate Board. The forecast should agree with the financial plans approved by the Council. They consider all financial implications, including any impact upon Prudential Indicators set by the Council, so that each Board may report on its budget requirement after the budget is prepared and presented to the Executive Board for scrutiny and approval.

How the body ensures effective processes and systems are in place to ensure budgetary control; to communicate relevant, accurate and timely management information (including non-financial information where appropriate); supports its statutory financial reporting requirements; and ensures corrective action is taken where needed

All financial information is generally provided monthly to the Management Team and to each Service Board thrice during the year. Periodic and annual reviews of financial reports indicate financial performance against forecasts for all the Council's spending.

Quarterly general fund budgetary control is provided to the resource board and the executive to track actual revenue and expenditure to budgets. Performance levels/service levels are monitored with the budget, and any necessary action is taken to align service outputs and budget.

The Council has adequate budgetary controls in place. The senior officers are responsible for maintaining fiscal control within their departments according to the agreed-upon principles and ensuring that all income and expenditures are properly recorded and accounted for. They monitor expenses and revenue against budgets for which they have responsibility and ensure that budget heads are not overspent by taking appropriate corrective action where variations from the approved budget are forecast. Additionally, they provide that a monitoring process is in place to review performance levels/ levels of service in conjunction with the budget, that it is operating effectively, and that an accountable budget manager is identified, as appropriate, for income and expenditure under their control.

Appendix A – Summary of arrangements (continued)

Governance

Reporting Sub-Criteria

Findings

How the body ensures it makes properly informed decisions, supported by appropriate evidence and allowing for challenge and transparency. This includes arrangements for effective challenge from those charged with governance/Executive Board

All reports presented to members have a straightforward review process to ensure directors sign off before finance reviews to ensure reports are appropriately scrutinised. When presented to members, all relevant documentation/information is included.

The Council operates using a committee system. This involves several Service Boards/Committees responsible for specific areas of activity, which report back to the full Council. This meeting cycle of Board and Council meetings usually runs five times throughout the year. The remit and responsibilities of the Boards and Committee are set out in the Constitution of the Council and include the Executive Board, the Resources Board, the Community and Environment Board, the Planning and Development Board and the Licensing Committee. The Council ensures that those making decisions, whether for the Authority or the partnership, are provided with information that is fit for the purpose – relevant, timely and clearly explains technical issues and their implications. Also, the Council ensures that professional advice on legal or financial implications is available and recorded well before decision-making and used appropriately.

All key decisions taken are discussed with the Executive Board during these meetings. All decisions taken are recorded as minutes and posted on the Council's website for all to access. The Council has several ways that employees can raise concerns of any kind, Members of the Council or the public. These include Confidential Reporting arrangements and complaint procedures.

How the body monitors and ensures appropriate standards, such as meeting legislative/regulatory requirements and standards in terms of officer or member behaviour (such as gifts and hospitality or declarations/conflicts of interests)

The Council has a constitution setting out its arrangements and the governance code. These safeguard members and employees against conflicts. At the beginning of each meeting, all participants must declare any interests related to the matters to be discussed.

Members of the Council are required to:

- comply with the statutory requirements to register, disclose and withdraw from participating in any matter in which they have a disclosable pecuniary interest.
- ensure that their register of interests is kept up to date and notify the Monitoring Officer in writing within 28 days of becoming aware of any change regarding their disclosable pecuniary interests.
- Make a verbal declaration of the existence and nature of any disclosable
- pecuniary interest at any meeting at which they are present at which an item of business which affects or relates to the subject matter of that interest is under consideration, at or before the consideration of the object of business or as soon as the interest becomes apparent.
- Members are required to, within 28 days of receipt, notify the Monitoring Officer in writing of any gift, benefit or hospitality with a value over £100 that they have accepted as a member from any person or body other than the authority. The Monitoring Officer will place their notification on a public register of gifts and hospitality.

Appendix A – Summary of arrangements (continued)

Improving economy, efficiency and effectiveness

Reporting Sub-Criteria

Findings

How financial and performance information has been used to assess performance to identify areas for improvement

Financial and service performance is regularly reported to members and the management team at the Resources Board to enable areas of concern to be highlighted and addressed. The Corporate Plan is approved before the start of each year and identifies the headline targets for the coming year, which are supported by greater detail within individual service plans. Services are monitored and discussed monthly at extended management team meetings. All senior management team members contribute actively to cross-organisational issues and corporate decision-making to match resources to the authority's objectives. Normally, progress against corporate plan targets is reported to senior managers, management teams and service boards every quarter, along with performance indicator information. A final position is collated at the end of the year, which is again reported to Members and published on the Council's website. On an annual basis, the Council issues a performance plan, giving information on the Authority's vision, strategy, plans and financial statements and information about its outcomes, achievements and the satisfaction of service users in the previous period.

Variances against outturn are reported and monitored through monthly and quarterly performance reviews. Reasons for variances (both positive and adverse) are provided against each indicator, and any resulting actions agreed upon are then put into place by the respective department responsible for the indications in question. Adverse indicator variances are dealt with promptly by the appropriate officer/service line head before reporting to Members.

How the body evaluates the services it provides to assess performance and identify areas for improvement

The monthly and quarterly performance monitoring process tracks progress against the Council's priorities and highlights potential risks and issues in achieving these. Performance management information about critical objectives is regularly provided to the Executive Board. The Council also prepares a Corporate Plan that sets out the vision for the Council and its priorities. It includes what the Council will do over the next three years to deliver the vision.

The MTFS links to the Corporate Plan, and the Corporate Plan drives the spending priorities that inform the MTFS. This will include allocating the overall expenditure budgets for Local Areas. The Corporate Director-Resources is responsible for producing the MTFS with Senior Officers and recommends measures to the Executive Board to support the Corporate Plan. This will be supported by policy options, savings and efficiencies, and both financial and non-financial information to assist decision-making.

The various boards meet monthly to review and discuss the different Council service offerings, including assessing progress against mandates, noting areas of improvement and establishing remedial actions. Depending on the gravity of the matter(s) discussed, the Council will discuss further and implement appropriate measures as guided by the Constitution.

Appendix A – Summary of arrangements (continued)

Improving economy, efficiency and effectiveness

Reporting Sub-Criteria

How the body ensures it delivers its role within significant partnerships, engages with stakeholders it has identified, monitors performance against expectations, and ensures action is taken where necessary to improve

Findings

The Council has undertaken resident surveys in the past, which are to be repeated regularly to identify the direction of travel; the Council is active with several key partners, from countywide partnerships to local groups and stakeholders. The Council has formally adopted a Board approved 'Partnership Framework & Significance Scorecard' protocol guiding partnerships and shared services. There is a comprehensive and up-to-date Register of partnerships and shared services.

Regular reporting is made to the Executive Board and resources board on the performance of partnerships during Council meetings. The annual budget includes allocated revenue and expenditure to the Council's partnerships. The governance arrangements in relation to the following shared service partnerships are adequate and operating effectively in practice:

- Home Environment Assessment & Response Team [HEART];
- North Warwickshire Community Safety Partnership (NWCSP);
- Coleshill School - Joint Indoor Leisure Provision Partnership; and
- Building Control - Local Authority Partnership.

Senior Officers must maintain a record of all contracts with external bodies. They should ensure that a risk management appraisal has been carried out and that any such partnership arrangement does not adversely impact the services the Council provides. The Director of Corporate Services - Resources should be promptly informed of any such contracts. The Deputy Chief Executive role extends into the Council's partnerships and joint ventures. He advises on adequate controls to ensure that resources are not wasted and that accounting procedures are satisfactory.

Appendix A – Summary of arrangements (continued)

Improving economy, efficiency and effectiveness

Reporting Sub-Criteria

How the body ensures that commissioning and procuring services is done in accordance with relevant legislation, professional standards and internal policies, and how the body assesses whether it is realising the expected benefits

Findings

The Council has a procurement team responsible for coordinating and advising on the procurement processes throughout the Council and establishing contracts and framework agreements for commonly used works, goods and services. The team continually seeks to improve its operations and achieve the best value and actively seeks opportunities for joint working with other local governments. The team also ensures that all procurement practices are carried out in accordance with the Council's standing orders and statutory obligations. The Procurement Strategy is a tool used to provide a consistent basis for procurement decisions. This strategy is intended to be reviewed regularly to ensure that it is current and encompasses any changes to EU or local regulations.

The Council publishes its Procurement opportunities using CSW-JETS (Coventry, Solihull, and Warwickshire Joint E-Tendering System). Suppliers register on the portal. This allows the suppliers to express interest in any of the Councils'/Authorities' opportunities. Registered suppliers may also be invited to tender when the Council has a requirement. The Procurement Team will advise and guide suppliers on the Council's processes and systems (CSW-Jets) potential or small suppliers. There are principles in the Council's constitution that apply to all contracts and procurements. The body also prescribes the procurement rules that must be followed for all warranties.

The Council's Tendering Procedures are based on Legislation Public Procurement rules, regarded as good practice. Whenever possible, an Open or Restricted Tender Procure should be used. The primary open tender process of the Council involves the procuring officer producing an advert, notice or tender briefing firms of the Council's requirements. The procuring officer then advertises for firms to submit an expression of interest or respond to an invitation to tender by a specified date. The procuring officer can contact firms and invite them to respond, and all firms that express an interest will be invited to submit a response to an invitation to tender.

Appendix B - Fees

Relationships, services and related threats and safeguards

The FRC Ethical Standard requires that we provide details of all relationships between Ernst & Young (EY) and the Council, and its members and senior management and its affiliates, including all services provided by us and our network to the Council, its members and senior management and its affiliates, and other services provided to other known connected parties that we consider may reasonably be thought to bear on the our integrity or objectivity, including those that could compromise independence and the related safeguards that are in place and why they address the threats.

There are no relationships from 1 April 2020 to the date of this report, which we consider may reasonably be thought to bear on our independence and objectivity.

Services provided by Ernst & Young

The next page includes a summary of the fees that you have paid to us in the year ended 31 March 2021 in line with the disclosures set out in FRC Ethical Standard and in statute. We confirm that none of the services listed in the audit fee table have been provided on a contingent fee basis.

As at the date of this report, we can confirm that we have been contracted by North Warwickshire Borough Council to perform agreed upon procedures engagements on the Council's Pooling of Housing Capital Receipts return for the year 2019/20 with a proposal to complete this work for each year to 2022/23.

We have adopted the necessary safeguards in our completion of this work and complied with Auditor Guidance Note 1 issued by the NAO in May 2020.

Appendix B – Fees

Fees

We carried out our audit of the Council's financial statements in line with PSAA Ltd.'s "Statement of Responsibilities of Auditors and Audited Bodies" and "Terms of Appointment and Further Guidance (updated April 2018)". As outlined in the Audit Results Report, we were required to carry out additional audit procedures to address audit risks about the valuation of property, plant and equipment and Investment. As a result, we have calculated an additional fee, which must be discussed with management and remains subject to approval by PSAA Ltd.

Our fee for 2020/21 is in line with the audit fee agreed and reported in our 2020/21 Annual Results Report.

Description	Planned Fee 2020/21 £	Final Fee 2019/20 £
Total Fee - Code work	32,618	32,618
Scale fee variation	TBC	52,528
Total Fee - Audit work	TBC	85,146
Pooling of Housing Capital Receipts engagement	9,500	9,500
Total fees	TBC	95,146

Note 1 - The proposed additional fees for 2020/21 comprise:

- Fees to address the changes in work required to meet changes in professional and regulatory requirements and the scope associated with the risk profile of the Council since the PSAA originally set the scale fee.
- Additional procedures to consider the estimation risk in the valuation of Pension Fund assets disclosed in the Council financial statement.
- Additional fees due to delays in the provision of audit evidence in the format needed to support an efficient audit process.
- Additional procedures to audit property, plant and equipment valuations, including the engagement of EY Real Estate experts to assess the impact of land and building valuations.
- Additional procedures to consider the Council's going concern assessment.
- Additional procedures relating to assessing the recognition of Covid 19 grants accounting.
- Additional procedures to consider the Council's arrangements for securing Value for Money

As of the date of this report, we have been engaged by the Council to perform an agreed-upon procedures engagement over the Council's Pooling of Housing Capital Receipts return for the 19/20 year. Based on discussions, this engagement will likely continue until the 22/23 engagement is completed.

We have adopted the necessary safeguards in our completion of this work and complied with Auditor Guidance Note 1 issued by the NAO.

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ED None

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Agenda Item No 16

Executive Board

12 February 2024

Report of the Chief Executive

Electoral Review – Future Council Size

1 Summary

- 1.1 Following the meetings of the Electoral Review Advisory Committee held on 9 November 2023 and 10 January 2024, Members are asked to consider a draft Council Size Report for submission to the Local Government Boundary Commission (LGBCE).

Recommendation to Council

That the draft Council Size Report, attached at Appendix A be submitted to the Local Government Boundary Commission (LGBCE).

2 Report

- 2.1 Attached at Appendix A is the report considered by the Electoral Review Advisory Committee held on 9 November 2023. The minutes of the meetings of the Advisory Committee held on 9 November 2023 and 10 January 2024 are also attached (Appendix B and C) for Members information.

3.1 Legal Implications

- 3.1.1 Any legal implications that arise as part of the Council's submissions on Council size or ward boundaries will be addressed at the appropriate time when reports come forward to Council. As these reports are at draft stage at this point, there are no specific legal implications related to this report.

3.2 Environment, Climate Change and Health Implications

- 3.2.1 There are no foreseen implications

3.3 Risk Management Implications

- 3.3.1 There are no foreseen implications

3.4 **Links to Council's Priorities**

3.4.1 Appropriate and equitable arrangements for democratic representation and governance are clearly a very high priority for any Council.

The Contact Officer for this report is Martyn Harris (719222).

Background Papers

Local Government Act 1972 Section 100D

Background Paper No	Author	Nature of Background Paper	Date
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Agenda Item No 5

Electoral Review Advisory Group

9 November 2023

Report of the Chief Executive

Electoral Review – Future Council Size

1 Summary

- 1.1 This is a report to consult Members on the first stage of the Electoral Review – determining the number of councillors the Borough Council will have in future.

Recommendation to the Group

- a That the contents of the report are noted; and**
- b That Members provide feedback to officers on the draft Council Size Report at Appendix 1**

2 Background

- 2.1 As reported to Executive Board on 19 July 2023, the Local Government Boundary Commission (LGBCE) is undertaking an electoral review of the borough, which will review and implement new proposals for the number of councillors and the shape, number and size of ward boundaries. The Council's ward boundaries were last reviewed in 1999.
- 2.2 The LGBCE has identified that a number of wards are now either +/- 10% of the average ward size and so the review will aim to re-draw ward boundaries to produce wards of equal size in future.
- 2.3 It is important to note, however that as part of this review, all ward boundaries could change, not just the areas which have been identified as either too large or small at present by the Commission.
- 2.4 The changes to the number of Councillors and new ward boundaries will take effect from the May 2027 Borough and Parish elections.
- 2.5 The first stage in the review is to determine the overall number of Councillors that the Borough Council requires, based on, for example:
- The role of members in future; based on the changing roles and expectations of elected members;
 - The overall strategic aims of the Borough Council
 - Changing resident needs and expectations

- The evolution of service delivery, though partnership working, new governance structures and digital working

2.6 The LGBCE make it clear in their guidance that there is no set formula or expectation for the number of Councillors that a council should have. In its guidance, it states:

“In the Commission’s opinion, local government is as diverse as the communities it serves – providing leadership, services and representation suited to the characteristics and needs of individual areas. The Commission aims to recommend electoral arrangements, including council size, which are appropriate for the particular local authority.”

3 Making a recommendation on the number of Councillors going forward

3.1 The Borough Council is a statutory consultee to the LGBCE review process and it is expected that, as an organisation the Council is best placed to make the arguments as to the appropriate number of councillors for North Warwickshire.

3.2 The Commission won’t accept “status quo” arguments without evidence that the current number of Councillors will continue to be appropriate in future. There is also no set formula for how many Councillors there should be for a Borough of this size.

3.3 However – it may be helpful to note the table below, looking at the electorate and number of Councillors in some of our neighbour Councils:

Local Authority	Electorate	Number of Councillors	Electors per Councillor
North Warwickshire	49,670	35	1419
Nuneaton and Bedworth (post review)	100,289	38	2639
Rugby	82,492	42	1964
Stratford	105,172	41	2565
Warwick	108,099	44	2456
Tamworth	58,838	29	2029
Hinckley and Bosworth	87,897	34	2585

3.4 In terms of Councils with similar electorates – the comparison is as follows:

Local Authority	Electorate	Number of Councillors	Electors per Councillor
Boston	48,955	30	1632
Maldon	50,839	31	1640
Malvern Hills	62,230	69	902
Torrige	52,648	36	1462

- 3.5 The table above does not include what the future electorate of North Warwickshire is likely to be. Members will be aware that there is significant population growth forecast in the next 5-10 years, which would likely increase the number of electors per Councillor significantly.
- 3.6 In order to maintain the electorate: councillor ratio at an appropriate level of approximately 1:1400, officers are recommending that the number of Councillors is increased.
- 3.7 Officers have made suggested arguments within the Council size document attached at Appendix 1. **In summary, there is a recommendation to increase the number of Councillors on the Borough Council from 35 to 39 in total.**
- 3.8 This is a draft recommendation – and the attached appendix is in draft format. Officers are seeking the views of members on this proposal.

... 3.9 As outlined in Appendix 1, the main reason for this suggested increase is due to:

- The unprecedented residential development in the Borough, forecast in the next 5-10 years, leading to a potential 20-25% increase in electorate
- The changing role of elected members since the last electoral review, leading to an increase in volume and complexity of casework undertaken by members
- The role of members in leading and shaping place, as well as representing residents. The proposed council size outlines the rural nature of the Borough over a large geographical area, with members being responsible for managing change throughout North Warwickshire, from residential development to the impact of HS2.

4 Role of Members

- 4.1 The draft Council size submission at Appendix 1 sets out a brief summary of the role that members at the Borough Council play at present and also makes some suggestions for what, going forward the role of members will be.
- 4.2 As per the recommendations, officers require a further steer from members and would ask for consideration of the following questions to help develop the rationale for the proposed increase in council size.

4.2.1 Representational Role:

- What level of casework do you currently have to deal with?
- Has the nature/complexity of the casework you are involved in changed?
- Are expectations from residents about your availability different than in the past?
- Are you contacted more/less frequently, via phone, email and/or social media?
- Has the number of Councillors who are double/triple hatted in terms of County/Borough/Parish Councillors changed?

4.2.2 Governance and Decision-Making Role:

- Have you been appointed to attend more Committees/Working groups?
- Has the number of meetings you attend increased?
- Have you been given more responsibility (e.g. spokesperson/chair/special responsibility allowance) than previously?
- Has the nature of meetings changed (e.g. more partnership working?)
- Have you been appointed to a larger/fewer number of outside bodies by the Council?
- Has the financial/scrutiny/accountability aspect of your role changed?
- Does the council's responsibility as a housing provider/managing the HRA involve additional input from members compared to a non-HRA authority?

5 Needs of the Borough's Residents

5.1 The review of council size also needs to reflect that the needs of the Borough's residents will have changed since the last review (in 1999), and therefore the role of the Borough Council and councillors will have changed:

5.1.1 Needs of Residents:

- Are residents more or less reliant on borough council services than at the time of the last review?
- Are residents presenting to the council with more complex problems, leading to involvement from a number of agencies?
- Are key challenges around housing/homelessness leading to an increase in customer contact and casework for members?
- Are there other areas of concern for residents that are producing pressure from a capacity/budgetary point of view that the council is trying to improve?

6 Conclusion

6.1 There are a number of factors (as exemplified by the questions at paragraph 4 and 5 above) that can influence the council's submission on how many councillors there should be in future. As per the recommendations, officers are seeking input from members on whether they support an increase in the number of councillors or not, and also which arguments members would like included in the report.

7 Report Implications

7.1 Finance and Value for Money Implications

7.1.1 There will be a small cost to the Borough Council in responding to the review, which will be managed within existing budgets.

7.1.2 Should LGBCE's decision be to increase the number of councillors, there would be a small increase in the budget for members' allowances.

7.2 Legal Implications

7.2.1 Any legal implications that arise as part of the Council's submissions on Council size or ward boundaries will be addressed at the appropriate time when reports come forward to Council. As these reports are at draft stage at this point, there are no specific legal implications related to this report.

7.3 Environment, Climate Change and Health Implications

7.3.1 There are no foreseen implications

7.4 Risk Management Implications

7.4.1 There are no foreseen implications

Links to Council's Priorities

7.5.1 Appropriate and equitable arrangements for democratic representation and governance are clearly a very high priority for any Council.

The Contact Officer for this report is Martyn Harris (719222).

Background Papers

Local Government Act 1972 Section 100D

Background Paper No	Author	Nature of Background Paper	Date
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Council Size Submission: Template

North Warwickshire Borough Council

Contents

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About You	2
Reason for Review (Request Reviews Only)	Error! Bookmark not defined.
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How to Make a Submission

It is recommended that submissions on future governance arrangements and council size follow the guidance provided and use the format below as a template. Submissions should be treated as an opportunity to focus on the future needs of the council and not simply describe the current arrangements. **Submissions should also demonstrate that alternative council sizes have been considered in drawing up the proposal and why you have discounted them.**

The template allows respondents to enter comments directly under each heading. It is not recommended that responses be unduly long; as a guide, it is anticipated that a 15 to 20-page document using this template should suffice. Individual section length may vary depending on the issues to be explained. Where internal documents are referred to URLs should be provided, rather than the document itself. It is also recommended that a table is included that highlights the key paragraphs for the Commission's attention.

'Good' submissions, i.e. those that are considered to be most robust and persuasive, combine the following *key success components* (as set out in the guidance that accompanies this template):

- Clarity on objectives
- A straightforward and evidence-led style
- An understanding of local place and communities
- An understanding of councillors' roles and responsibilities

About You

The respondent should use this space to provide the Commission with a little detail about who is making the submission, whether it is the full Council, Officers on behalf of the Council, a political party or group, a resident group, or an individual.

This response has been developed by officers and overseen by a group of members from each political group on the council.

The Council established an Electoral Review Advisory Group, which developed this response, before it being approved by the Council's Executive Committee and Full Council.

The Context for your proposal

Your submission gives you the opportunity to examine how you wish to organise and run the council for the next 15 - 20 years. **The consideration of future governance arrangements and council size should be set in the wider local and national policy context.** The Commission expects you to challenge your current arrangements and determine the most appropriate arrangements going forward. In providing context for your submission below, please demonstrate that you have considered the following issues.

- When did your Council last change/reorganise its internal governance arrangements and what impact on effectiveness did that activity have?

- To what extent has transference of strategic and/or service functions impacted on the effectiveness of service delivery and the ability of the Council to focus on its remaining functions?
- Have any governance or capacity issues been raised by any Inspectorate or similar?
- What influence will local and national policy trends likely have on the Council as an institution?
- What impact on the Council's effectiveness will your council size proposal have?

North Warwickshire Borough Council (NWBC) operates a "Committee System" of governance and has done for the last 15 years. This involves a small number of committee managing different aspects of the work of the council, with committees reflecting the political balance of the council.

In May 2023 following the local elections, the council moved to "no overall control", with the conservatives being the largest group, but without an overall majority on the council.

Members consider that the current system of committees allows for a more consultative approach to decision-making, something that will be further explored under the current political balance. Officers keep members informed of upcoming policy developments and areas of concern via a range of committees. Member-officer relations are good and both officers and members have different, clearly separate roles.

The committee system, by its nature, involves a greater number of councillors in decision-making, and this does therefore have an impact on the number of councillors required to operate this system, especially compared to neighbouring authorities with smaller cabinet-style executive arrangements.

As explored further below, the council proposes to increase the number of councillors in future. From a governance perspective, members in future will continue to play the same role within the committee system, however the pace of change in the borough in terms of residential development and other changes will require greater oversight from councillors – a role that only elected members can play.

Local Authority Profile

Please provide a short description of the authority and its setting, in particular the local geography, demographics and community characteristics. This should set the scene for the Commission and give it a greater understanding of any current issues. The description should cover all of the following:

- Brief outline of area - are there any notable geographic constraints for example that may affect the review?
- Rural or urban - what are the characteristics of the authority?
- Demographic pressures - such as distinctive age profiles, migrant or transient populations, is there any large growth anticipated?
- Community characteristics – is there presence of "hidden" or otherwise complex deprivation?
- Are there any other constraints, challenges, issues or changes ahead?

Further to providing a description, the Commission will be looking for a submission that demonstrates an understanding of place and communities by putting forth arguments on council size based upon local evidence and insight. For example, how does local geography, demographics and community characteristics impact on councillor casework, workload and community engagement?

North Warwickshire Borough Council's vision is:

“Protecting the rurality of North Warwickshire, supporting its communities and promoting the wellbeing of residents and business.”

Which highlights the fact that the county district of North Warwickshire is, at heart a rural district set in the middle of England. The borough itself stretches from the edge of Coventry in the South, to Tamworth in the North and from Leicestershire in the East and the edge of Birmingham in the West.

North Warwickshire is a recognisable community with a distinctive sense of place. It is connected to but separate from the wider West Midlands area as well as the East Midlands.

In terms of key infrastructure features, the Borough is dominated by the A5, which cuts the borough in half between East – West and the M6 toll road and M42 in the West of the Borough. The Borough is also affected by Phase One of HS2 at Coleshill and Water Orton. The West Coast Mainline also passes through the borough, between Nuneaton and Tamworth.

The area does not benefit from any significant UK, regional nor EU regeneration regimes, and therefore the council is the key driver in terms of regeneration, in past and future bids to national levelling up and other funds.

Rural Nature

North Warwickshire is a rural Borough with over 50 settlements, covering 110 square miles.². The Borough has an open rural character which is unique compared to many of the surrounding urban areas. Settlements range in size from Atherstone, and Mancetter, with a population of 10,000 to small hamlets

Atherstone with Mancetter, Coleshill and Polesworth with Dordon are the three market towns, which provide the majority of services to the surrounding villages and hamlets.

Local requirements have changed as the residents of the countryside have changed in recent years. There are many people who live in the smaller settlements and the countryside, who have difficulty accessing services/facilities and affordable housing. In many communities, there is ongoing conflicting requirements for additional housing, whilst protecting the rural character of these smaller settlements. As the local planning authority and with the council retaining control of its own housing supply, the borough council has a major role in dealing with these issues.

Agriculture is a major influence on the character of the Borough. A thriving rural economy is important to the Borough. Members have a recognised role in not just representing constituents but also managing the large, rural area and acting as custodian of place as well as its people.

Demographic pressures

Community characteristics

Some communities in the borough have a former mining legacy. The Borough had a number of mines and there are still ex-mining communities in need of assistance, in particular with the standard of housing and access to skills, training and access to better health care.

The Council recognises that there are clear links between issues of poor health, obesity and open space/recreation provision, education and the skills gap, rural transport and isolation and that the borough council and councillors have a leadership role in these areas

From the residents perspective, there are significant public concerns to ensure the impacts of residential development and new transport infrastructure are mitigated, and residents look to the council to do this. There is public concern to maintain the provision of local services that are vital to community life, whilst recognising that there are limited council resources reflecting a small and rural population.

Council Size

The Commission believes that councillors have three broad aspects to their role. These are categorised as: **Strategic Leadership, Accountability (Scrutiny, Regulatory and Partnerships), and Community Leadership**. Submissions should address each of these in turn and provide supporting evidence. Prompts in the boxes below should help shape responses.

Strategic Leadership

Respondents should provide the Commission with details as to how elected members will provide strategic leadership for the authority. Responses should also indicate how many members will be required for this role and why this is justified. **Responses should demonstrate that alternative council sizes have been explored.**

Topic		
<p>Governance Model</p>	<p><i>Key lines of explanation</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ <i>What governance model will your authority operate? e.g. Committee System, Executive or other?</i> ➤ <i>The Cabinet model, for example, usually requires 6 to 10 members. How many members will you require?</i> ➤ <i>If the authority runs a Committee system, we want to understand why the number and size of the committees you propose represents the most appropriate for the authority.</i>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ <i>By what process does the council aim to formulate strategic and operational policies? How will members in executive, executive support and/or scrutiny positions be involved? What particular demands will this make of them?</i> ➤ <i>Whichever governance model you currently operate, a simple assertion that you want to keep the current structure does not in itself, provide an explanation of why that structure best meets the needs of the council and your communities.</i>
	Analysis	Click or tap here to enter text.
Portfolios	<i>Key lines of explanation</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ <i>How many portfolios will there be?</i> ➤ <i>What will the role of a portfolio holder be?</i> ➤ <i>Will this be a full-time position?</i> ➤ <i>Will decisions be delegated to portfolio holders? Or will the executive/mayor take decisions?</i>
	Analysis	Click or tap here to enter text.
Delegated Responsibilities	<i>Key lines of explanation</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ <i>What responsibilities will be delegated to officers or committees?</i> ➤ <i>How many councillors will be involved in taking major decisions?</i>
	Analysis	Click or tap here to enter text.

Accountability

Give the Commission details as to how the authority and its decision makers and partners will be held to account. The Commission is interested in both the internal and external dimensions of this role. **Responses should demonstrate that alternative council sizes have been explored.**

Topic	
Internal Scrutiny	The scrutiny function of authorities has changed considerably. Some use theme or task-and-finish groups, for example, and others have a committee system. Scrutiny arrangements may also be affected by the officer support available.
<i>Key lines of explanation</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ <i>How will decision makers be held to account?</i> ➤ <i>How many committees will be required? And what will their functions be?</i> ➤ <i>How many task and finish groups will there be? And what will their functions be? What time commitment will be involved for members? And how often will meetings take place?</i> ➤ <i>How many members will be required to fulfil these positions?</i> ➤ <i>Explain why you have increased, decreased, or not changed the number of scrutiny committees in the authority.</i> ➤ <i>Explain the reasoning behind the number of members per committee in terms of adding value.</i>

	Analysis	Click or tap here to enter text.
Statutory Function		This includes planning, licencing and any other regulatory responsibilities. Consider under each of the headings the extent to which decisions will be delegated to officers. How many members will be required to fulfil the statutory requirements of the council?
Planning	Key lines of explanation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ <i>What proportion of planning applications will be determined by members?</i> ➤ <i>Has this changed in the last few years? And are further changes anticipated?</i> ➤ <i>Will there be area planning committees? Or a single council-wide committee?</i> ➤ <i>Will executive members serve on the planning committees?</i> ➤ <i>What will be the time commitment to the planning committee for members?</i>
	Analysis	Click or tap here to enter text.
Licensing	Key lines of explanation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ <i>How many licencing panels will the council have in the average year?</i> ➤ <i>And what will be the time commitment for members?</i> ➤ <i>Will there be standing licencing panels, or will they be ad-hoc?</i> ➤ <i>Will there be core members and regular attendees, or will different members serve on them?</i>
	Analysis	Click or tap here to enter text.
Other Regulatory Bodies	Key lines of explanation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ <i>What will they be, and how many members will they require?</i> ➤ <i>Explain the number and membership of your Regulatory Committees with respect to greater delegation to officers.</i>
	Analysis	Click or tap here to enter text.
External Partnerships		Service delivery has changed for councils over time, and many authorities now have a range of delivery partners to work with and hold to account.
	Key lines of explanation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ <i>Will council members serve on decision-making partnerships, sub-regional, regional or national bodies? In doing so, are they able to take decisions/make commitments on behalf of the council?</i> ➤ <i>How many councillors will be involved in this activity? And what is their expected workload? What proportion of this work is undertaken by portfolio holders?</i> ➤ <i>What other external bodies will members be involved in? And what is the anticipated workload?</i>
	Analysis	Click or tap here to enter text.

Community Leadership

The Commission understands that there is no single approach to community leadership and that members represent, and provide leadership to, their communities in different ways. The

Commission wants to know how members are required to provide effective community leadership and what support the council offers them in this role. For example, does the authority have a defined role and performance system for its elected members? And what support networks are available within the council to help members in their duties? The Commission also wants to see a consideration of **how the use of technology and social media by the council as a whole, and by councillors individually, will affect casework, community engagement and local democratic representation. Responses should demonstrate that alternative council sizes have been explored.**

Topic		Description
Community Leadership	Key lines of explanation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ <i>In general terms how do councillors carry out their representational role with electors?</i> ➤ <i>Does the council have area committees and what are their powers?</i> ➤ <i>How do councillors seek to engage with their constituents? Do they hold surgeries, send newsletters, hold public meetings or maintain blogs?</i> ➤ <i>Are there any mechanisms in place that help councillors interact with young people, those not on the electoral register, and/or other minority groups and their representative bodies?</i> ➤ <i>Are councillors expected to attend community meetings, such as parish or resident’s association meetings? If so, what is their level of involvement and what roles do they play?</i> ➤ <i>Explain your approach to the Area Governance structure. Is your Area Governance a decision-making forum or an advisory board? What is their relationship with locally elected members and Community bodies such as Town and Parish Councils? Looking forward how could they be improved to enhance decision-making?</i>
	Analysis	Click or tap here to enter text.
Casework	Key lines of explanation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ <i>How do councillors deal with their casework? Do they pass it on to council officers? Or do they take a more in-depth approach to resolving issues?</i> ➤ <i>What support do members receive?</i> ➤ <i>How has technology influenced the way in which councillors work? And interact with their electorate?</i> ➤ <i>In what ways does the council promote service users’ engagement/dispute resolution with service providers and managers rather than through councillors?</i>
	Analysis	Click or tap here to enter text.

Other Issues

Respondent may use this space to bring any other issues of relevance to the attention of the Commission.

[Click or tap here to enter text.](#)

Summary

In following this template respondents should have been able to provide the Commission with a robust and well-evidenced case for their proposed council size; one which gives a clear explanation as to the governance arrangements and number of councillors required to represent the authority in the future.

Use this space to summarise the proposals and indicate other options considered. Explain why these alternatives were not appropriate in terms of their ability to deliver effective Strategic Leadership, Accountability (Scrutiny, Regulation and Partnerships), and Community Leadership.

[Click or tap here to enter text.](#)

NORTH WARWICKSHIRE BOROUGH COUNCIL

**MINUTES OF THE
ELECTORAL REVIEW ADVISORY GROUP**

9 November 2023

Present: Councillor D Wright in the Chair

Councillors Clews, Gosling, Jenns, Melia, Osborne, H Phillips and Reilly

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Humphreys, (Substitute Councillor Clews) and Simpson (Substitute Councillor Reilly).

1 Election of Chair

It was proposed by Councillor Jenns and seconded by H Phillips that Councillor D Wright Chair the meeting.

2 Declarations of Personal or Prejudicial Interest

None were declared at the meeting.

3 Electoral Review – Future Council Size

The Chief Executive consulted Members on the first stage of the Electoral Review – determining the number of councillors the Borough Council would have in the future.

Resolved:

- a That the report be noted; and**
- b That the comments made by Members in respect of changes to the Borough, Demographics and councillor workload be incorporated into the draft Council Size Report and a further meeting of the Group be arranged in December 2023 to consider the updated version of the Report.**

D Wright
CHAIR

NORTH WARWICKSHIRE BOROUGH COUNCIL

**MINUTES OF THE
ELECTORAL REVIEW ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

10 January 2024

Present: Councillor D Wright in the Chair

Councillors Clews, Gosling, Humphreys, Jenns, Melia and H Phillips

An apology for absence was received from Councillor Simpson (Substitute Councillor Clews).

Councillors Farrow, Jarvis and Stuart were also in attendance. With the consent of the Chairman, Councillor Stuart spoke on Minute No 6 (Electoral Review – Future Council Size).

4 Declarations of Personal or Prejudicial Interest

None were declared at the meeting.

5 Minutes of the Meeting held on 9 November 2023

The minutes of the meeting held on 9 November 2023 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

6 Electoral Review – Future Council Size

Following the meeting of the Advisory Committee held on 9 November 2023, the Chief Executive asked Members to consider an updated draft Council Size report.

Resolved:

- a That the report be noted; and**
- b That Executive Board consider the updated draft Council Size report at its meeting to be held on 12 February 2024.**

D Wright
CHAIR