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# **Waltham Cross Town Centre Planning Framework**

## **Draft for Public Consultation**

**May 2022**

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## 1. Introduction

This town centre planning framework sets out in draft form the Council's proposed approach to development opportunities within Waltham Cross Town centre. It is a non-statutory document but it will be treated as a material consideration in relation to development proposals and how they are assessed through the planning application process.

The planning framework is published in draft for public consultation, and views are sought from local businesses and residents, site owners and tenants, infrastructure providers and other stakeholders with an interest in the future of Waltham Cross.

## Background

The town centre development strategy supplements the *Waltham Cross Town Centre Strategy* (2015). That document set out five objectives for the town centre, all of which remain relevant today:

- To make Waltham Cross an attractive and high quality town centre
- To make Waltham Cross modern, popular and vibrant
- To ensure Waltham Cross is a well managed town centre
- To make Waltham Cross Town Centre accessible
- To make Waltham Cross a living and working town centre

Broxbourne Council has proposed various ways to achieve all these objectives. During September 2021 the Council consulted on improvements to the public realm of the town centre, following on from the public realm scheme at Queen Eleanor Square. The main proposals of the next phase of works include the following:

- A 'flexible' High Street
- Reintroduction of light traffic during the evenings to boost evening activity
- New on-street car parking spaces
- New signalised pedestrian and cycle crossing at the junction of Monarch's Way and the northern High Street.
- Green wall and new cycle lane on western side of Monarch's Way

***Below: Visualisation of proposals for the future High Street***



However, the scope of the above improvements do not include built development. The town centre planning framework complements the work being done in relation to the town centre improvements and together these various strands will achieve the objectives of the town centre strategy

### **Built development in the town centre**

In relation to the last of those objectives, the town centre strategy identified a need to extend town centre activity into the evenings, by *“maximising opportunities for new, high quality and environmentally sustainable residential apartments to be built in and around the town centre and at the same time seeking to provide an environment within which businesses can support this new residential presence and thrive.”* The purpose of the development strategy is to support that final objective, alongside other town centre projects, such as the proposed street-level improvements.

Since publication of the Town Centre Strategy, there have been two significant residential developments<sup>1</sup> within the town centre: 40 apartments at Swan Court, above the Pavilions shopping centre; and a further 40 apartments at Eleanor House, opposite the bus station. Both of these developments were carried out under prior notification/permitted development procedures as office to residential conversions. The Council has published targeted ‘Article 4’ directions to protect commercial frontages within the town centre from inappropriate conversion to residential development under recent permitted development regulations put in place by the government.

Going forward, the Council wishes to see properly planned development in order to achieve a ‘living and working town centre’, and has been working to identify opportunity sites where development could come forward in future.

### **Identifying Opportunity Sites**

Recently, a number of development opportunities have been gaining momentum, and a number of planning permissions have been issued, including for a redevelopment of the TFC supermarket, for a new Travelodge hotel, and for an ‘aparthotel’ and apartments at the former Empire Cinema site.

It is anticipated that there will be a number of further developments coming forward over the next few years. The planning framework is necessary in order to ensure that, where they adjoin each other, new developments will not prejudice other developments in the vicinity, and also so that their impacts on the existing land uses, and in particular residents, can be accommodated without undue adverse impacts.

In order to assess potential impacts, a ‘massing model’ of the town centre, which represents both existing and potential new developments, has been prepared. The massing model has informed judgments about the height and massing of new development.

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<sup>1</sup> The planning references are as follows: Swan Court: 07/16/0090/PNRES (formerly known as Bartholomew Court); Eleanor House: 07/15/0207/PNRES. A third prior notification permission, at Durkan House (07/13/0727/PNRES) is located outside the town centre north of the major roundabout.

**Below:** The town centre massing model (opportunity sites shown in beige)



Local Plan Policy WC2 allocates the northern High Street for the creation of a new mixed-use quarter including residential development above ground floor commercial uses. The whole of the site allocation falls within the town centre boundary.

The area covers a number of sites in different landownerships as set out below:

**West of Sturlas Way**

- Homebase

**East of Sturlas Way**

- 149 High Street
- 133 to 137 High Street
- Wickes
- Sawyers Court



The policy proposes a mixed-used quarter comprising 150 homes on land east of Sturlas Way (including from south to north, Wickes, and Sawyers Court). In order to refine the initial work upon which the Local Plan figures were based, the Council has recently undertaken massing modelling of the northern High street to supplement proposals received for parts of the allocation.

The policy states that incremental development will be resisted, and that the site should be developed in accordance with a comprehensive masterplan. In practice, given the marked differences in the opportunities and constraints at each part of the allocation, it is likely that different sites will come forward at different phases, and

therefore it is important that developments do not prejudice the potential for development of later phases.

This town centre planning framework sets out the main planning issues for each site. Development proposals that demonstrate that they will not prejudice the potential for future developments at sites set out in the town centre planning framework will be acceptable in principle subject to satisfactory resolution of the relevant planning issues.

## General principles

Development proposals should have regard to the policies set out within the Broxbourne Local Plan, in particular *Policy DSC1: General Design Principles*, and the Broxbourne Supplementary Planning Guidance.

In addition to this, the following principles are specific to Waltham Cross Town Centre and should be fully considered and discussed with the Local Planning Authority at an early stage in the formulation of development proposals:

- a) Safeguard or enhance the character and identity of Waltham Cross
- b) Retain or enhance features of historic or architectural merit, wherever possible
- c) Contribute to a greening of the town centre
- d) Not prejudice the development potential of adjacent sites
- e) Provide adequate private residential amenity space, for example roof terraces or within the curtilage of development
- f) Safeguard the outlook and amenity of existing residents
- g) Provide adequate mitigations for air quality impacts on new residents
- h) Maximise active ground-floor commercial or service frontages
- i) Encourage active and healthy lifestyles
- j) Protect and where possible enhance the setting of the Eleanor Cross
- k) Incorporate appropriate sustainability features
- l) Where relevant, ensure an adequate supply of public car parking spaces.

Given the public transport accessibility of the town centre, and the range of local facilities available, it is considered appropriate that car parking provision at a significantly lower level of provision than set out in the Local Plan parking guidelines, would be appropriate, perhaps in the range 0.5 to 1 spaces per dwelling. This would be consistent with other similar locations elsewhere and would help to reduce pressure on the highways network from new developments.

Provision of a suitable level of car parking provision has informed this document. Surveys of town centre car parking have indicated that there is some surplus public parking provision, in particular at the Pavilions and at Eleanor Cross Road. As set out in this document, release of some parking spaces at those two sites could unlock significant development potential.

## 2. Phasing of Opportunity sites

In total, 13 sites have been identified as presenting suitable development opportunities. These have been grouped into short, medium and long-term opportunities on the basis of the degree of complexity in bringing forward each site, taking account of the position of the landowner; whether relocations of existing uses are required; and how far planning has progressed. The levels of development indicated are provisional and will be subject to refinement if and when they progress through planning. **Table 1** below sets out the identified opportunity sites. **A plan showing the location of the sites accompanies this Framework.**

**Table 1: Opportunity sites**

Ref	Location	Indicative development
<b>Phase 1: Short-term opportunities (c.300 dwellings + commercial)</b>		
1a	149 High Street	90 dwellings
1b	133-137 High Street	52 dwellings
1c	118 High Street (former Poundland site)	10 dwellings, 60 bed hotel
1d	88-102 High Street (former Empire Cinema)	135 bed 'aparthotel'
1e	99 High Street (TFC supermarket)	16 dwellings + GF commercial
<b>Phase 2: Medium-term opportunities (c. 600 dwellings + commercial)</b>		
2a	Homebase	225 dwellings + GF commercial
2b	Fishpools	51 dwellings + GF commercial
2c	Wickes	110 dwellings + GF commercial
2d	The Pavilions Shopping Centre	120 Dwellings + GF commercial
2e	Conservative Club	70 dwellings = GF commercial
2f	Telephone Exchange, Stanhope Road	Community facilities
<b>Phase 3: Long-term opportunities (c. 140 dwellings)</b>		
3a	Sawyers Court	70 dwellings
3b	Royal Mail Depot	70 dwellings + GF commercial to bus station frontage

It is also possible that other developments not included in Table 1 may come forward. In such cases, sites will be considered in relation to their ability to address the general principles set out in the preceding section.

Two further sites were considered for development but have been discounted.

The Town Centre Strategy identifies the **KFC site** as a potential opportunity, and states on page 53 that *“The site’s redevelopment for residential and the re-provision of the retail unit at ground floor level would enable the creation of a more attractive, landmark gateway to the town centre from Monarch’s Way.”* At present there are no indications that the landowner is likely to want to change use and the site is too small to be considered a strategic development opportunity.

**The high street car park** was considered for its development potential, including the potential for podium parking underneath a residential block. However, due to the awkward and irregular nature of the site the conclusion it has not be possible to produce a satisfactory design solution, and therefore the site has been discounted from further consideration at this stage.

## Phase 1: Short term opportunities

### 1a) 149 High Street

This site has been acquired by the Council. In principle the redevelopment of this site is considered acceptable as it lies within the Northern High Street Local Plan site allocation. The site excludes the Wickes service yard fronting Sturlas Way.

**Below:** massing model of potential development, indicating Sturlas Way in the foreground and the Wickes site to the left. The open space to the front is owned by Wickes and may come forward independently at a later date as a stand-alone development.



The main planning issues for this site are:

- continued provision of active ground floor commercial frontages to the High Street;
- safeguarding the ability to bring forward a separate development on the Wickes service yard site in the medium term (site 2c below);
- safeguarding the potential for ground floor active frontages in a new street on the adjacent Wickes site, should that land come forward for development;
- podium car parking for commercial and residential uses
- relationship to the adjacent redevelopment site to the south at 133-137 High Street
- Service access via Sturlas Way
- impact on existing residential properties at Swan Court on the opposite side of the High Street.



### 1b) 133 to 137 High Street

This site is in private third party ownership. It lies to the southern end of the Northern High Street Local Plan site allocation. A scheme has been prepared by for a 5-storey development, including 52 apartments. To date this proposal has been resisted because of the implications for co-ordinated delivery in terms of a comprehensive approach required by policy WC2, in particular its relationship to the Council-owned site at 149 High Street.

***Below:*** landowner visualisation of proposed scheme, looking north-east across Park Lane.



The main planning issues for this site are as follows:

- should complement proposals for the adjacent Council-owned land to the north at 149 High Street
- creating a new active frontage and amenity space to Park Lane
- impact on the amenity of the existing residential development at Swan Court (see above visualisation)

### 1c) 118 High Street (former Poundland site)

Permission (07/20/1084/F) has been granted for a 60 room hotel (Travelodge), 10 residential apartments and ground floor commercial use. It is expected that construction will start in 2022.



The main planning issues for this site are as follows:

- Taller blocks to the rear of the site
- Potential for future development at the Royal Mail Depot site
- Pedestrian access to Eleanor Cross Road
- etc

### 1d) 88-102 High Street (former Embassy Cinema site)

The site has been vacant since the closure of the Bingo hall in January 2017. Permission was originally granted for change of use to an 'aparthotel' (07/18/0512/F) and a subsequent approval was granted to vary conditions and expand from 119 to 135 bedrooms (07/19/0745/F). A current planning application however has moved away from the aparthotel concept and is seeking approval for residential development.

**Below:** *approved scheme 07/19/0745/F (developer visualisation)*



The main planning issues for this site are as follows:

- Achieving a viable mix of development
- Retaining the art deco façade of the Embassy cinema building
- Contribution to the street scene
- Scale and bulk of development
- Relationship to potential future development of the adjacent Royal Mail depot site

### 1e) 99 High Street (TFC supermarket)

This proposal for 16 new residential dwellings above a supermarket was granted permission in February 2021 (application reference 07/18/0130/F). As shown in the visualisation below, the consented scheme includes provision for communal roof gardens and 56 solar panels

**Below:** Visualisation of the consented scheme, 99 High Street



The main planning issues for the site include:

- High quality design appropriate to the prominent location at Queen Eleanor Square
- Relationship to Fishpools department store to the north
- Service access to the rear
- Private amenity space within the development
- Maintenance of the ground floor retail/supermarket use
- Viability of development

## Phase 2: Medium Term Opportunities

### 2a) Homebase

On land west of Sturlas Way (i.e. the **Homebase site**) policy WC2 identifies the potential for significant housing, possibly as part of a mixed-use development incorporating the existing store. A planning application for a new supermarket only was recently refused. The landowners' current plans are unknown and redevelopment on this site is considered to be a longer-term prospect.

**Below:** massing model from 2019 pre-application proposal



The main planning issues for this site include:

- Safe pedestrian and cycle crossings of Sturlas Way and Winston Churchill Way
- Integration of the site with the town centre
- Ground floor development appropriate to the location of the site within the town centre boundary
- Air quality and noise mitigation
- Private amenity space
- Customer car parking
- Improving the distinctiveness of the site when viewed from the roundabout and surrounding roads.
- Improve the definition of Sturlas Way

The massing model from the preferred option (see above) suggested the potential for 140-150 apartments above an Aldi supermarket.

## 2b) Fishpools Furniture Store

The Local Plan states “The Council is also supportive of the potential to develop the Fishpools business by relocating the High Street store to a state-of-the-art site that would help to anchor a flagship development at Park Plaza North. That would be enabled by a mixed-use redevelopment of the current town centre site which would need to ensure the continuation of a retail frontage along the High Street.” (Local Plan, paragraph 10.5). It is understood that Park Plaza North is again on the market but the availability of the relocation site remains uncertain.

**Below:** Massing model showing the potential form of a redevelopment



The main planning issues for this site are as follows:

- Securing a suitable relocation site within the Borough for the existing furniture store
- Impact on the setting of the Eleanor Cross memorial when viewed from Eleanor Cross Road
- Vehicular access from Berkely Avenue and Sturlas Way
- Retention of the historic facades fronting the High Street
- Relationship to adjacent development at TFC supermarket, 99 High Street
- Impact on the amenity of existing residential properties at Berkely Avenue
- Pedestrian connection through the development to the High Street

The massing model indicates that 51 residential dwellings could be achieved within a scheme of this nature.

## 2c) Wickes

The site comprises the Wickes store, a customer car park to the north, and a service yard to the south. In response to a consultation on the draft Local Plan in 2016, the owners of the Wickes store indicated their support in principle for a mixed-use development on the site, subject to securing a relocation site at Park Plaza North.

**Below:** Massing model showing Wickes site and creation of a new street linking Sturlas Way and the northern High Street.



The main planning issues for this site include:

- Potential relocation of Wickes to another site e.g. Park Plaza North
- Creation of a new street, including active ground floor frontages, along the southern edge of the site, linking the Homebase site to a new public square at the Northern High Street and Ruthven Avenue.
- Potential for stand-alone development on the service yard to integrate with redevelopment of the adjacent Council-owned block
- Relationship to the possible redevelopment at Sawyers Court to the north
- Limited undercroft/podium car parking.

## 2d) The Pavilions

In May 2020 planning committee refused permission for a mixed use development on the multistorey car park at the Pavilions shopping centre, removing the underused upper two storeys and developing a 5-storey residential block on top. Private amenity space was to be provided by means of external roof terraces.

**Below:** *Visualisation of refused scheme 07/19/0570/F*



The main planning considerations for this site include:

- Extent of any development scheme within the Pavilions complex
- Potential for a tall landmark building of a high quality design
- Scale, massing and elegance of the building
- Selection of high quality materials
- Retention of the existing commercial activity within the Pavilions shopping centre
- Continued public car parking provision within the multistorey
- Impact on the amenity of the residents of Swan Court
- Provision of private amenity space
- Safeguarding the potential for a separate development at the adjacent Conservative Club site

The refused scheme proposed 119 dwellings in total (limited to the car park area only). At the time members of the Planning Committee had concerns about the height and bulk of the proposed development. It may be possible to overcome these concerns with a more suitable design.



## 2e) Conservative Club

This site is identified in the Town Centre Strategy. It is encircled by the access ramp into the Pavilions Centre multi-storey car park. The club was granted planning approval on 15 November 2008, (7/08/0233/F/WX) to redevelop the premises to include an 8 storey building, comprising retail units at ground and first floor level and 60 residential units over the upper 6 floors.

Negotiations with the owners would need to be re-awakened to facilitate this development and ensure that it is of good design and enhances the town centre. If this site is to come forward for development, it may be appropriate for it to do so within a comprehensive masterplan for the Pavilions.

***Below: lapsed permission 7/08/0233/F/WX***



The main planning issues for this site include:

- Provision of active ground floor commercial frontages
- Visual impact from Monarch's Way and Eleanor Cross Road
- Relationship to the multistorey car park access ramp
- Private amenity space within the development

## 2f) Telephone Exchange, Stanhope Road

This site is not within the town centre but is closely related to it. Although no redevelopment proposal has been received in respect of this vacant building, redevelopment could offer redevelopment opportunities associated with the adjacent health centre, school, and young people’s centre. Given proposals for a new at-grade crossing of Monarch’s Way between Stanhope Road and the northern High Street, the site is potentially well connected into the town centre.

***Below:*** The telephone exchange site from Monarch’s Way



The main planning issues for this site include:

- Potential for disposal of the building for other uses
- Cost of demolition or suitability of conversion of existing buildings
- Efficient use of surplus car park within the curtilage
- Relationship to adjoining uses including the school (and associated safeguarding issues), GP Surgery and youth centre
- Potential for community facilities, either expansion of adjacent surgery or school
- Air quality issues arising from traffic on Monarch’s Way
- Opportunities to contribute to the ‘greening’ of Monarch’s Way

## Phase 3: Long Term Opportunities

### 3a) Sawyers Court

Adjoining the Wickes site to the south, this site has been identified as having significant potential as a landmark/gateway feature at the northern entrance to the town centre. It lies within the Northern High Street site allocation within the Local Plan. The block comprises residential dwellings owned and managed by the Metropolitan Housing Trust, who would need to be prepared to progress plans for their site. A tall building would be necessary in order to maximise the potential of the gateway site and also to help pay for demolition and reconstruction costs.

***Below:*** massing model indicating possible gateway block at Sawyers Court site with external private amenity space above ground floor level.



The main planning issues for this site include:

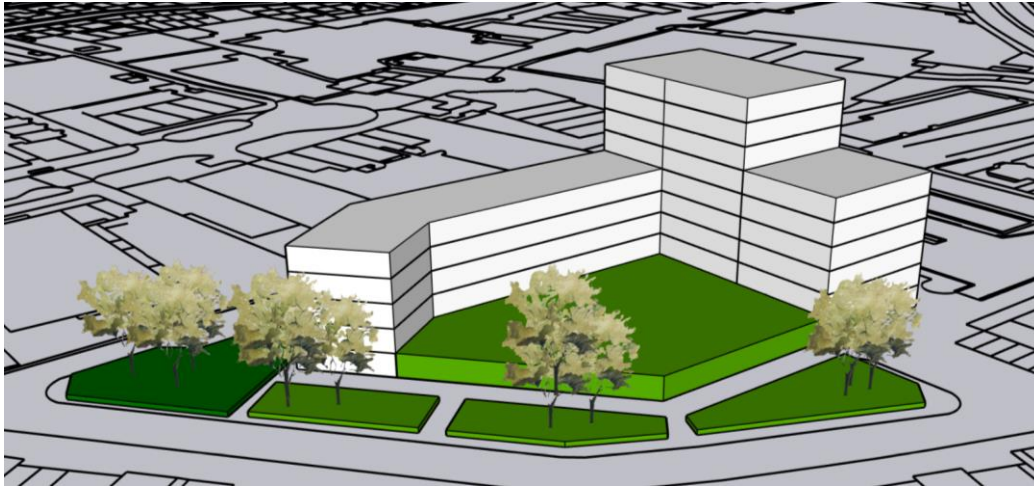
- Suitable housing provision for existing tenants
- High quality landmark building appropriate to town centre gateway
- Air quality impacts on the lower floors
- Limited podium parking to the ground floor
- Provision of private amenity space on terraces within the development

The massing model indicates the potential for 70 dwellings arranged across 12 storeys.

### 3b) The Royal Mail depot and Eleanor Cross Road Car Park

This site is identified in the Town Centre Strategy 2015 as making little contribution to the attractiveness or retail function of the town centre. It comprises a warehouse and parking for delivery vehicles to the rear. To the north it adjoins the bus station and to the east the Eleanor Cross Road Council car park.

**Below:** Massing model, showing higher buildings to the north and west of the site, adjacent to the bus station.



The main planning issues for this site:

- Need to secure a suitable relocation site which meets the operational needs of the Royal Mail
- Preservation of the amenities of the existing residential properties adjoining the site at Abbey Road
- Higher buildings to the back of the site, adjacent the Travelodge/118 High Street site
- Vehicular access from Abbey Road
- Undercroft/podium car parking for residents
- Pedestrian and cycle access via Eleanor Cross Road
- Potential to retain part of the Eleanor Cross Road public car park, if needed.

The massing model indicates the potential for 70 dwellings.

### 3. Infrastructure Planning

New development brings with it a need for supporting infrastructure, including transport, school places, healthcare, green infrastructure, and other needs generated by developments.

#### *School place planning*

Development of town centre apartments is likely to result in a lower child yield than developments in suburban locations. Nevertheless, there is little capacity at Four Swannes Primary School and Hurst Drive, the nearest Primary Schools. In terms of secondary capacity, there may be spare capacity at Goffs Churchgate School. The potential for new primary and secondary provision will be explored through the Waltham Cross Area Action Plan.

#### *Transport infrastructure*

With the bus station being located within the town centre, and the railway station just a short walk away, Waltham Cross town centre is the most accessible location in the borough of Broxbourne.

Development within the town centre could also help to support a new railway station at Park Plaza, just a few minutes' pleasant walk along Park Lane.

Highways modelling indicates worsening congestion at the roundabout to the north end of Monarch's Way by 2033, and no solution to this has yet been identified, although options could include a hamburger junction.

#### *Healthcare provision*

The Stanhope GP surgery is located close by the town centre. The NHS has indicated its preference to create larger 'hubs' rather than to expand local surgeries, and it is currently looking to expand facilities in Cheshunt rather than at Waltham Cross. However, there may be the potential to expand the surgery to the adjacent telephone exchange site, or to locate within the town centre itself, and this will be discussed further with the NHS.

#### *Public and Private Open Spaces*

The town centre is lacking in high quality open spaces, the nearest open spaces being the Holmesdale Open Space to the south and the Waltham Cross Playing Fields adjacent to the station. Further afield is Cedars Park. Planting of street trees and the creation of pocket parks and green walls is being pursued through the town centre improvements work done separately. It is expected that new developments will incorporate adequate amenity space, for example using roof terraces or other opportunities within the curtilage of the development.

## **4. Conclusion**

It should be reiterated that the indicative figures provided will need to be carefully tested through more detailed work through planning applications.

In the event that all the development opportunities set out within this planning framework come forward, it would result in around 1,000 additional apartments within Waltham Cross town centre.

Taken together with the street-level improvements planned by the Council, this level of development could be a powerful catalyst to drive the revitalisation of the area. It will also require significant joint working with other public bodies in order to ensure that the infrastructure is in place to support growth.

### **Next Steps**

All consultation responses will be reviewed and the main planning issues considered. A schedule of comments received will be published, and where necessary the framework may be amended. It will then be reported back to the Waltham Cross Development Group and to Cabinet for adoption.

The planning framework will be used as a platform to undertake discussions with a range of stakeholders, in particular landowners, but also with infrastructure providers, in order to progress a co-ordinated approach to the implementation of development.

