

# News about Watford Health Campus



The Watford Health Campus scheme is a long-term project that has at its heart the delivery of new hospital facilities for Watford and the wider community in south-west Hertfordshire.

This brings with it an exciting opportunity to improve the large area surrounding Watford General Hospital (over 26.5 hectares, running down from Vicarage Road to Wiggshall Road), much of which is currently derelict, contaminated and unused.

Over the last few years a significant amount of work has been undertaken to develop and progress the vision for the Health Campus and to:

- safeguard and facilitate the delivery of a major **new modern hospital** in Watford
- deliver economic growth through **new employment space** and up to **1,600 new local jobs**
- **clean-up of former industrial land** and regeneration of derelict land
- provide a range of **good quality homes**, including much needed family and affordable housing
- **improve and increase access to green space**, including investment in the Colne river park
- provide a link road to the hospital site which will help **reduce congestion** and allow better access for hospital vehicles and visitors
- provide a **community garden** for the use of local residents
- provide a new **neighbourhood centre** in the west of the town
- have high quality design, making the most of opportunities for energy conservation, renewable energy provision and water recycling
- deliver **value for money**
- support the business case for the Croxley Rail Link.

## History of the Health Campus

Around ten years ago, Watford was faced with the very real prospect of losing its general hospital. A significant local campaign gathered widespread support from local residents to retain hospital facilities at Watford. This campaign was successful. At around the same time, Watford Borough Council had started a project with the aim of regenerating the nearby Cardiff Road Industrial Estate.

Since then, the council and other partners, most notably West Hertfordshire Hospitals NHS Trust and Watford Football Club, have been working to deliver Watford Health Campus. The scheme received planning permission in 2010 including for a re-provided hospital, a new access link road and 500 homes.

Since then the funding arrangements for hospitals has changed and there needed to be a revision to the plans to make the scheme work. As a result, after an open and through international procurement process, the Health Campus partnership (Watford Borough Council and West Hertfordshire Hospitals NHS Trust) appointed Kier Project Investment Ltd as the private sector partner to redevelop the masterplan. Kier has a great deal of experience, and success, in delivering large regeneration schemes and is committed to making the investment needed for the scheme to come to fruition.

## Major milestones to delivering the Health Campus

On 3 December 2012, Watford Borough Council's Cabinet gave approval for the revised scheme to go ahead, so that a legal agreement with Kier could be signed and a joint partnership between the council and Kier could be formed. The way the partnership works is that the council, working with the NHS Hospital Trust, will provide the land and Kier will provide finance and development expertise. The Hospital Trust will be able to join the Partnership once it has the legal status to do so.

Within the revised masterplan, the Hospital has been looking at the best plan to deliver the modern hospital facilities desperately needed.

The Hospital has been clear that their preferred option is to expand onto the current council Farm Terrace allotment site. This, in their opinion, provides the best configuration for the new hospital buildings and is also the most cost effective option.

The revised plans for the Health Campus that were agreed include the use of the Farm Terrace allotment site. The council owned allotment land will be used for hospital facilities and a proportion of the new family homes. Including the allotment land helps to improve the viability of the scheme.

### **What happens to allotment holders?**

All 65 allotment holders at Farm Terrace are to be offered alternative allotment plots at either Holywell (500 metres away) or Paddock Road (1.2 miles away). Each allotment holder will also be financially compensated, in accordance with legislation.

The council has been discussing these issues with allotment holders for the last six months and one proposal made in these discussions is for the new Health Campus to provide a 'community garden' - where local people will still be able to come together to grow produce. This has been agreed.

By relocating the allotments, it will avoid significant disruption and the impact of pollution over the duration of the Health Campus works – up to a twenty year period.

The decision to use the council's Farm Terrace allotment land means that the homes built will include a mixture of family homes, which is what our town particularly needs, rather than lots of one-bedroom flats.

The final decision on whether the council can use the Farm Terrace allotment land is the responsibility of the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, as in order for it to be used for a purpose other than allotments it has to be 'de-regulated', which is a formal legal process.

Elected Mayor of Watford Dorothy Thornhill said: "All the members of the Cabinet were really affected by the passion shown by the allotment holders, so this was a difficult decision, but we have to give the Health Campus the best chance of success."

### **Does this mean there will be less allotment plots available within Watford?**

No. There will be no change to the overall level of allotment plots within the borough. For every square metre of Farm Terrace that is affected there will be a square metre replaced, albeit at a different location in the borough. We are very fortunate in Watford, that we have an excellent level of allotment provision – well above what national guidelines suggest should be provided.

### **More investment for allotments across the town**

The Cabinet also agreed to prioritise the council's new allotment investment plan which will see over £800,000 of improvements carried out at all allotment sites across the town. This will include things like new fencing, toilets, compost bins; vacant plot clearance and access improvements.

### **When will residents have their say?**

Since 2010, there has already been outline planning permission to build 500 homes on the original 26 hectare Health Campus site. However a new planning application will be submitted for the revised scheme. Residents will have full opportunity to raise concerns or issues about this application at the time.

An independent Planning Inspector has already looked at the council's development plans following a public inquiry and she determined that the council's plans are sound, recognising that the council is meeting its obligations to deliver sustainable homes, space for businesses and open space.

### **What happens next?**

The Health Campus partnership will submit a planning application to Watford Borough Council for the health campus masterplan in the spring 2013, on which residents and others will be asked their views. Separately, an application will be made to the Secretary of State for the decommissioning of the allotment land.

### **When will the works start?**

Various parts of the Health Campus will be completed at different times. It is anticipated that the new road will be one of the first things to be delivered. Work should begin on this in late 2013. The building of a bridge over the planned Croxley Rail Link (CRL) is scheduled to be completed by 2014. If this is delayed until after the CRL is opened, the costs increase substantially and would have a detrimental impact on the overall viability of the scheme. This road will help reduce the impact of construction traffic on the existing roads and provide the necessary improvement in access for emergency vehicles at the earliest possible opportunity.

**For more information, visit [www.watfordhealthcampus.org](http://www.watfordhealthcampus.org)**