



**WATFORD
BOROUGH
COUNCIL**

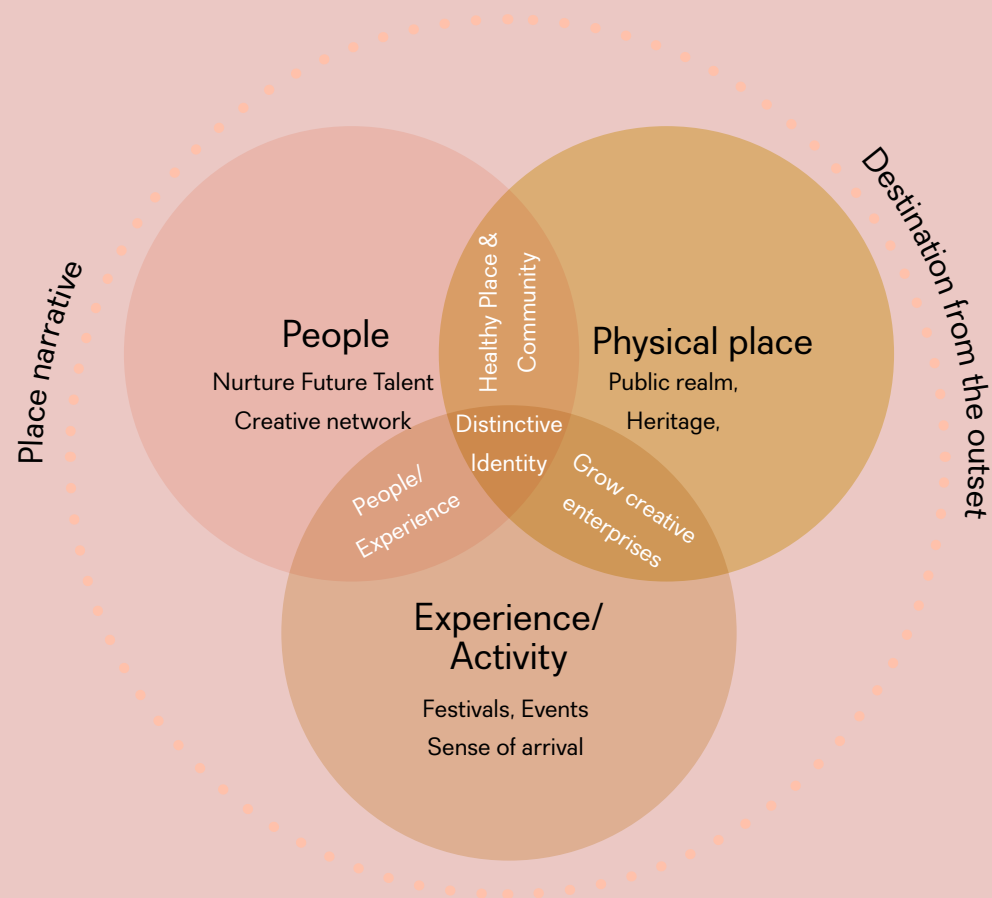
DRAFT 03

Watford Cultural Strategy 2018-2025



Dallas-Pierce-Quintero

What can a cultural strategy offer Watford?



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Introduction

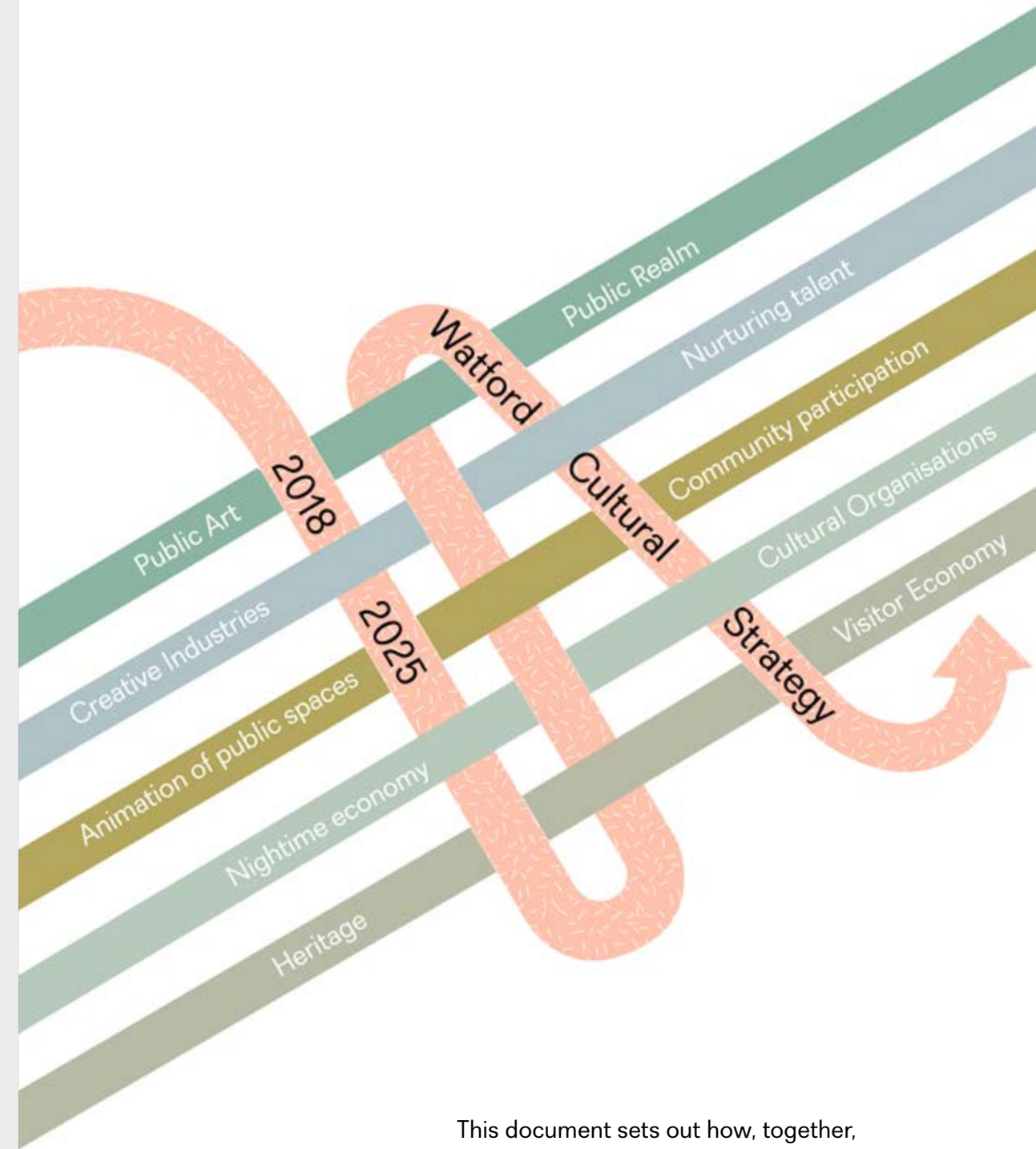
Peter Taylor

Mayor of Watford

I am delighted to introduce Watford's Cultural Plan 2018-2025.

Watford is a town full of surprises and this is particularly true of our outstanding cultural offer. Whilst much-loved attractions such as Warner Brother Studios, the Palace Theatre and Watford Colosseum have helped the town build a great reputation as a centre for arts, entertainment and heritage, this Plan highlights our potential and ambition to do even more. We want to use the opportunities presented here to showcase what is great about Watford. This includes our more hidden cultural treasures as well as the ones that are emerging thanks to our vibrant, diverse communities and through the use of new, digital media and technology – another area where the town is forging ahead.

I am confident that this Plan will galvanise all of us – organisations, community groups, businesses and talented individuals - to work together to strengthen Watford's cultural life and the vibrancy and success of the town. Our combined effort will put Watford even more firmly on the cultural map and secure our long-term position as an exceptional regional centre for entertainment, arts and heritage.



This document sets out how, together, Watford's partners are weaving a coherent and cohesive cultural vision across regeneration, business, culture and community plans. Our aim is to enrich cultural activity and opportunity for all and, in doing so, amplify Watford's profile as a dynamic place to experience international and home-grown culture.

Our Vision

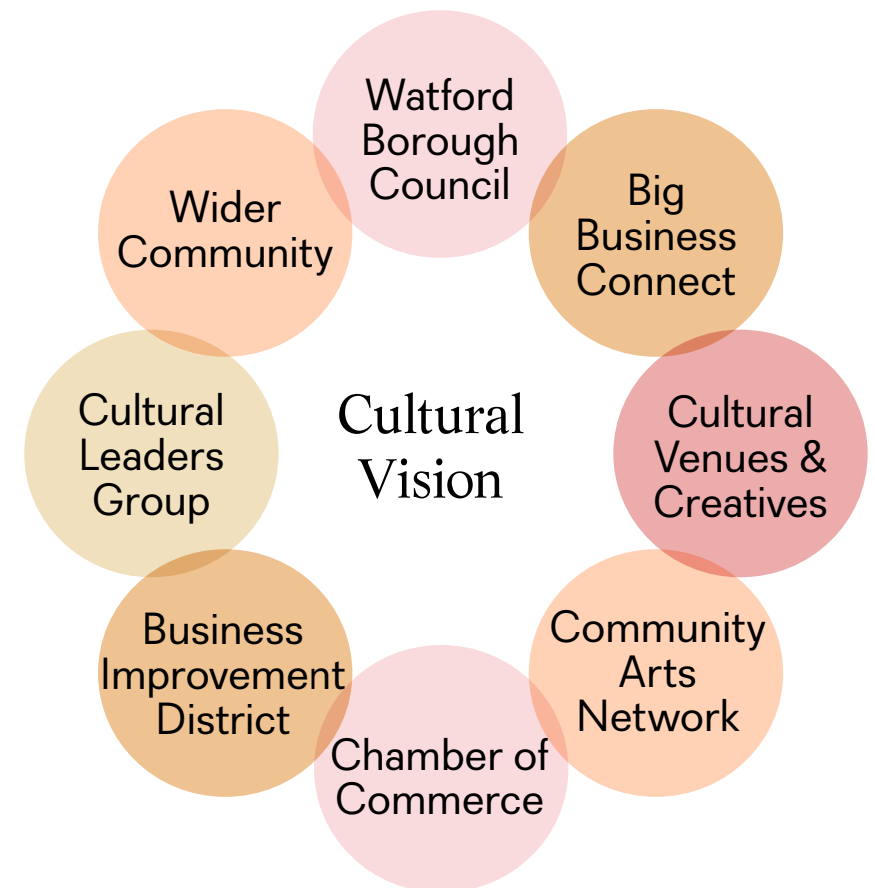
for Arts, Culture & the Creative Industries

“Our ambition is to grow sustainable opportunities for creative enterprise, cultural provision and participation for our local communities, business and visitors which will, in turn, strengthen Watford’s appeal as a creative destination.”

What do we mean by ‘Culture?’ We use ‘culture’ in this strategy as an umbrella term. It includes the creative industries, heritage, arts and cultural organisations, and sectors from visual and digital art, to theatre, film, music, dance, literature and fashion, with some crossover into the realms of sport and leisure, although these last are not the primary focus of this strategy.

Watford Working Together

Many conversations have taken place in 2018 to draw together a picture of current provision and future aspiration. To achieve this vision, co-ordinated joint working is required across organisations and individuals to galvanise efforts to amplify the cultural and creative life of Watford.



“Business Improvement Districts, cultural organisations and local authorities can work together to help town centres thrive; bringing people together, promoting tourism and civic pride, and revitalising neighbourhoods.” Improving Places, Arts Council & Mayor of London 2017.

Context

This Cultural Strategy will assist in defining a cultural narrative for Watford at a time when the borough is undergoing significant change.

Our boundary is the whole borough, not just the town centre hub. A significant percentage of cultural activity currently takes place beyond the town centre confines, in Cassiobury Park, places of worship, education and community centres, and bars and pubs, although the majority of the town's cultural venues are within the town centre.

In developing Watford's cultural narrative, we have been informed by the history of the town, its people and the many different communities that have occupied it. Places evolve over time and in this chapter we will take a look at how Watford has changed and will continue to do so in order to inform how culture can help shape its future.



History of Watford

Watford has long been a place used to welcoming new people and diverse communities.

A 12th century charter granted a market to be held and St Mary's Church was built. The town grew on a north/south route, still the current High Street, with travellers passing through to Berkhamsted Castle and Kings Langley.

Agriculture flourished until the canal was built followed by, in 1837, the London and Birmingham Railway. From then the town grew rapidly with paper-making mills influencing the development of printing. Brewing flourished in Watford until the late 1900s.

In the years leading up to WWII, the town was the largest printing centre on the planet. The most successful of the Watford print companies was Oldhams Press and the iconic green spire of the former Printworks building is still part of the local skyline.

In the 1950s and 60s, modernist architect Erno Goldfinger designed the home of British furniture manufacturer, Hille, where the designer Robin Day created the propylene stacking chair, now a modern design classic.

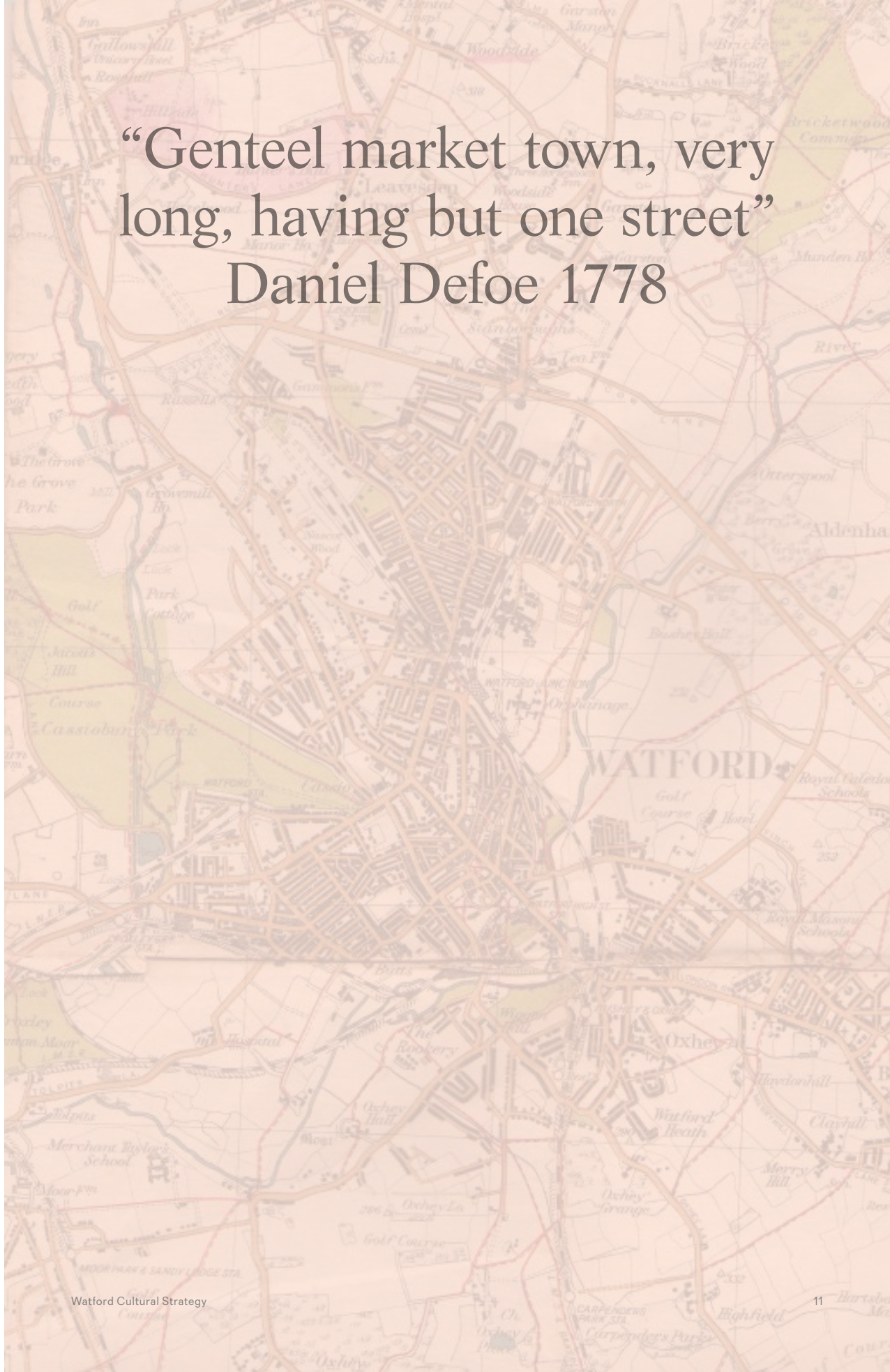
Culture, sport and green space are at the heart of Watford's heritage. Cassiobury Park, formed from Cassiobury House grounds, Cheslyn

House and Gardens and Woodside Park all hold Green Flag awards.

Culture and heritage are often intertwined in Watford; all key cultural venues are housed in heritage buildings. Its much-loved Edwardian playhouse is home to a thriving, ambitious and award-winning theatre company, Watford Palace Theatre, whilst Watford Museum is located in the former Benskins brewery building with exhibits of local heritage, as well as hosting community heritage and arts projects.

For many, Watford is synonymous with football; the town is home to a popular professional Premier League football team who reached the 1984 FA Cup Final, long supported by Sir Elton John, who is Honorary Life President. Today the Community Sports and Education Trust delivers community sports and educational activities on behalf of Watford Football Club, focusing on Sports Participation, Social Inclusion, Health, Education and Community Facilities.

Now we want to build on Watford's story of production to inform its cultural narrative and make its rich heritage more visible in Watford's public spaces for more people to discover.



“Genteel market town, very long, having but one street”
Daniel Defoe 1778

“‘Watforda’ appears in an Anglo-Saxon charter of 1007. The name is thought to come from the Old English for ‘waet’ (full of water due to marshy land) or ‘wath’ (hunting), and ford. ”

A County of Small Towns: The Development of Hertfordshire's Urban Landscape

From 'A Mapp of Hartfordshire', by Richard Blome 1673
Cashio is the name of an ancient hundred which includes the parishes of Abbots Langley, Bramfield (detached), Chipping Barnet, Codicote (detached), East Barnet, Elstree, Hexton (detached), Newnham (detached), Northhaw (detached), Norton (detached), Redbourn, Rickmansworth, Ridge, Sandridge, Sarratt, Shephall (detached), St Albans, St Michael's, St Paul's Walden (detached), St Peter's, St Stephen's and Watford.



“Spent the 50s and 60s in Cassiobury Park. Paddling in the concrete pool and fishing for tiddlers down near the wooden bridge. What great, happy days....Going to see Father Christmas in Clements... the floor moving, all made of wood, do not get that today. So glad I lived in Watford in the 50s, wonderful memories.”

Our Watford History Project

The Pond, Watford 1950's.



Communities

A small town on the rise, Watford's communities are diverse, friendly and keen to maximise on what's on offer and refresh how the borough is perceived. Its location near London with connections to the rest of Hertfordshire have historically made it a natural place to settle. There are increasing numbers of young professionals, as well as long-term residents, brought up locally and rooted in the area.

Interestingly, whilst Watford is well placed for commuting into London, many people also commute into Watford from surrounding Hertfordshire and millions of visitors arrive into Watford annually to visit the Harry Potter Experience at Leavesden or to watch football. The expansion of Intu shopping centre will see further visitors to the town centre for the expanded retail and leisure offer including a 9-screen IMAX cinema and bowling.

Culturally, many people of all ages are actively participating in creative life through the many venues and events that take place in the town centre and in Cassiobury Park.

- Strength: a relatively young and well-educated population, able to contribute to the economy. The largest populations by age band in Watford are: 25-44 years (31,700) and 45-59 years (18,100).
- Challenge: the high proportion of population of child bearing age and young parents who require family housing and jobs.
- Watford has a diverse population, more so than the rest of Hertfordshire. Around 17% are British Asian, Indian or Pakistani, with relatively high numbers from Romania, Bulgaria, Poland, Latvia and Lithuania.

People

Watford has produced a string of notable figures, from musicians, such as Henry J Wood, founder of the BBC Proms, to international popstars such as Spice Girl Geri Halliwell and politicians from opposite ends of the spectrum such as Mo Mowlam and Priti Patel.

Several sporting heroes also originate from Watford, amongst them batsman Nick Knight and rugby player Josh Lewsey MBE. The town is the birthplace of Gareth Southgate, manager of the most successful English football team in recent years, and Vinnie Jones another famed footballer whose reputation for foul play in sport propelled a successful career in gangster films.

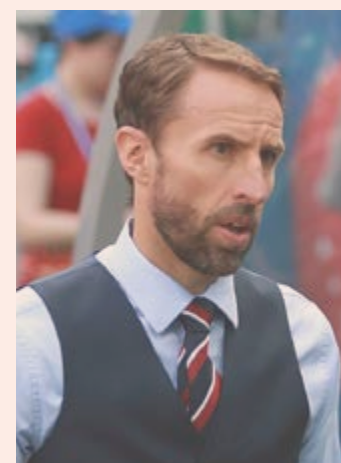
Watford is the birthplace of the pioneering female English animator, director, screenwriter and producer Joy Batchelor (b. 1914). Best known for her BAFTA nominated animated feature film *Animal Farm* (1954), she co-established

Halas + Batchelor producing over 2000 cartoons. In her later years she taught at the British Film Institute and was recently commemorated in a number of events and screenings marking the centenary of her birth.

Mary Portas, a retail consultant and known figure in the public eye, hails from North Watford and is the subject of a new production by Watford Palace Theatre, *Shop Girl* based on her memoir of the same name.

There is the opportunity to celebrate and connect with the town's most recognised people, both to help tell the story of Watford but also to inspire and motivate a new generation of Watfordians.

“Hertfordshire's places are what sets it apart..... characterised by a dense network of urban areas. The largest – with a population of 132,000 – is Watford..”



Watford today

Watford's town centre is compact, walkable and well-connected, with a redesigned public space at The Parade. The borough has retained much of its heritage character, including 92 nationally listed buildings, as well as historic markers, quirky features and folklore which often go unnoticed.

Cassiobury Park is the largest of Watford's popular parks and green spaces. Over 190 acres, the park was formerly the grounds of Cassiobury House and has recently seen improvements through a Heritage Grant.

- Strengths: 37% of its green spaces are 'Green Flag' and many undergoing restoration. Watford aims to defend the 'green belt'.
- Challenges: Existing density combined with demand for new housing are putting pressures on green space.

We would like to build Watford's reputation for excellent, high quality green spaces and begin to populate the town centre with more greening and pocket parks.

Cassiobury Splash Park.



Watford today

Since the early 1800s Watford has been a place of great connectivity. The Grand Union Canal brought goods not easily available before and the opening of the railway in 1837 encouraged new industry. Now the fifth best connected area in the UK, Watford is just 18 minutes to London by rail, with easy access to London Underground and Overground and sited at the intersection of the M1 and M25.

While the rail and underground offer quick and easy connections, the A41 & A405 have also impacted the connectivity of the town centre to its immediate environs. The arrival of the ring road in the 1960's created a vehicular 'city wall', reducing traffic in the town centre, but also putting pressure on parking space on the periphery, limiting pedestrian crossing points and discouraging cyclists to venture beyond the town centre.

The resulting first impression of many visitors approaching Watford by car is a town with its back towards the ring road, with little sense of what the town has to offer. Watford Junction, the main transport hub and arrival point for visitors is a good ten minute walk from the High Street. Effort is required to make this route more interesting, to rebalance the dominance of the car, and consider the streets as places for public life as well as travel.

We propose cultural and public realm interventions to strengthen the visitor experience, including at arrival points and at those thresholds, underpasses and crossings, where pedestrians & cyclists traverse the ring road, to create welcoming gateways into the town centre.

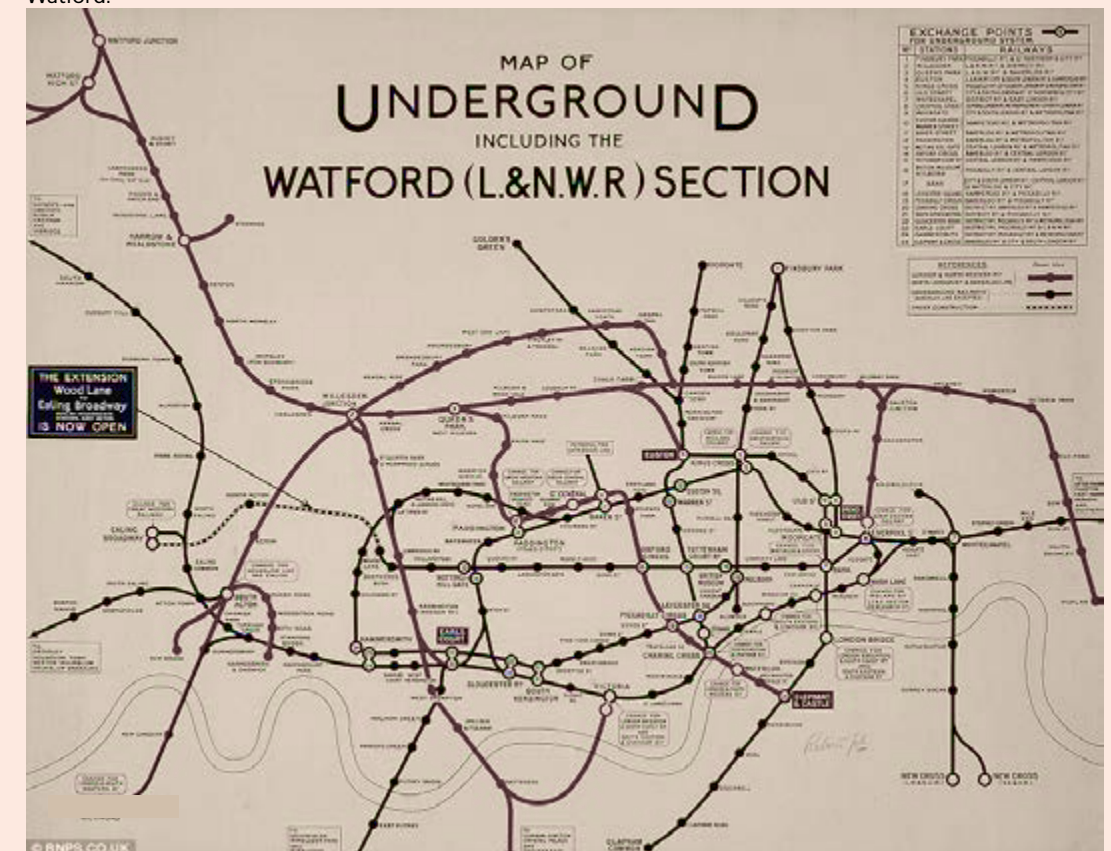
We need to work with Watford's existing built environment, to reveal local qualities, bring in beauty and a human scale, creating space for a variety of activities dependent on streets.

Consultation and the involvement of local residents, businesses and visitors is essential to ensure the longevity and ownership of new proposals.

Right: Watford High Street Station c1905.



Below: 1926 Underground Map showing Metropolitan line to Watford.



Cultural & Creative Industries

By the late 1920s, Hertfordshire was at the heart of film making in Britain. Now, to the north of the borough, world class films are made at Warner Bros Leavesden and a master class of film making expertise is showcased at the Making of Harry Potter.

A new cinema complex is opening at Intu bringing commercial film viewing to residents, visitors and workers. Despite this, and a growing mix of creative Small & Medium Enterprises, including the award-winning digital creative company Mew Lab, the creative economy in Watford is considered to be relatively underdeveloped given its proximity of London.

Now Watford wants to maximise its heritage, cultural, tourist and creative industry potential, expand on opportunities for the borough's creativity to be shared and shine a light on its cultural and heritage assets in creative ways.

We propose a series of new projects to bring the borough's rich production history and social stories to light, through public art and design, digital approaches and community activity. A new branding and communications strategy could also help draw new audiences.

Filming Fantastic Beasts: The Crimes of Grindelwald
Jaap Buitendijk



Cultural & Creative Industries

Today many people associate the town with Watford Football Club, the town's resident premier league football club, which, like the Harry Potter Experience, draws huge numbers of visitors. However the challenge remains how to encourage these visitors to explore other cultural and leisure experiences on offer.

Watford punches far above its weight in cultural terms. Unusually for a small town, it is home to three professional theatre companies, all of them part of the Arts Council of England's National Portfolio.

Its much-loved Edwardian playhouse is home to a thriving, ambitious and award-winning theatre company, Watford Palace Theatre (WPT). A producing theatre, its work tours nationally and internationally and to the West End. WPT also produces the town's landmark festival of outdoor arts, IMAGINE WATFORD, which plays a nationally significant role in the development of this growing field through commissioning new work from British artists, and promoting cultural diversity.

Rifco Theatre Company, also based at the Palace, is a very successful national and international touring company with a British Asian focus and strong community engagement, both in the development of the work and in terms of audiences. tiata fahodzi, based at the Barn, is another dynamic and forward-

looking touring company with a focus on the African diaspora.

World-class music and comedy can be seen at the recently renovated Watford Colosseum, where the BBC Concert Orchestra are resident and record live for BBC Radio. Cafes, pubs and bars support the local music scene, which is lively and varied.

Watford Museum and The Pump House Theatre and Arts Centre host a diverse range of grassroots community creativity and across the borough there are orchestras, choirs and arts groups. Herts Inclusive Theatre offers a vibrant programme of activities for all ages.

Festivals and events run in various locations through the year, including the BIG EVENTS programme produced by the council, including winter and summer activities popular with families.

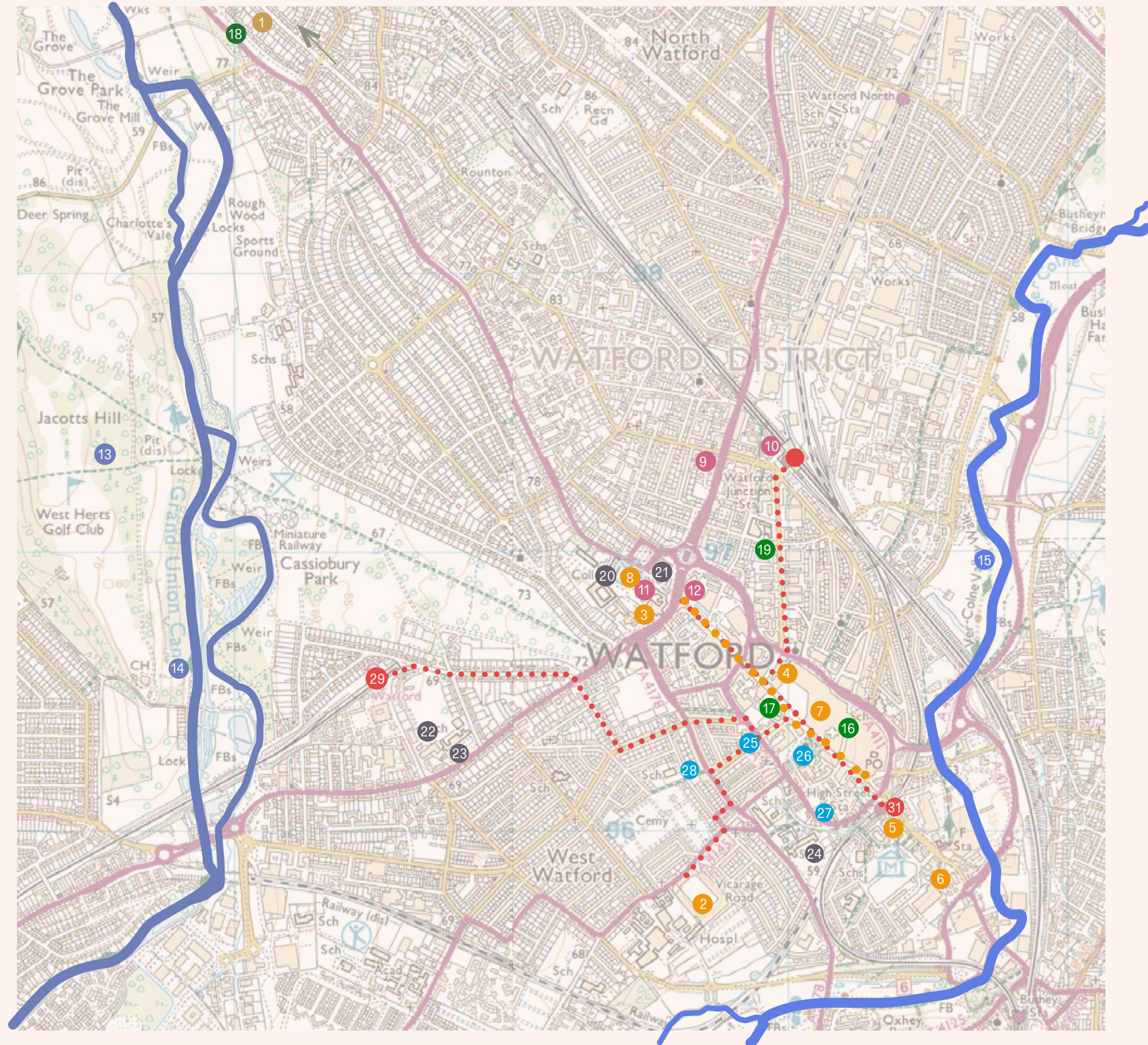
West Herts College boasts fantastic facilities and offers a range of higher education creative courses including Advertising, Music, Media, Photography and Performing Arts and Art & Design, Dance, Fashion & Textiles, Foundation and Graphic Design for school leavers.

We need to promote collaboration between key cultural partners and other venues, such as pubs, community centres and music venues to strengthen and align Watford's offer, and create the necessary conditions to allow new activities to flourish.



Cultural & Creative Industries

- Arts, Culture & Attractions
 - 1 The Harry Potter Experience
 - 2 Watford Football Club
 - 3 Colosseum
 - 4 Watford Palace Theatre
 - 5 Watford Museum
 - 6 Pump House Theatre
 - 7 Intu cinema & bowling
 - 8 Watford Leisure Centre
- Live Music venues
 - 9 The White Lion
 - 10 The Flag
 - 11 The Horns
 - 12 LP cafe
- The Great Outdoors
 - 13 Cassiobury Park
 - 14 River Gade
 - 15 River Colne
- Business & Retail
 - 16 Intu shopping centre
 - 17 High street shops
 - 18 Warner Bros. Leavesden
 - 19 Clarendon Rd
- Education
 - 20 West Herts College
 - 21 Watford Library
 - 22 Watford Grammer School for Boys
 - 23 Watford School of Music
 - 24 Watford Grammar School for Girls
- Places of Worship
 - 25 Holy Rood Church
 - 26 St Mary's Church
 - 27 Watford Central Mosque
 - 28 Al Zahra Centre
- Transport Hubs
 - 29 Watford Underground Station
 - 30 Watford Junction Rail Station
 - 31 Watford High Street Rail Station

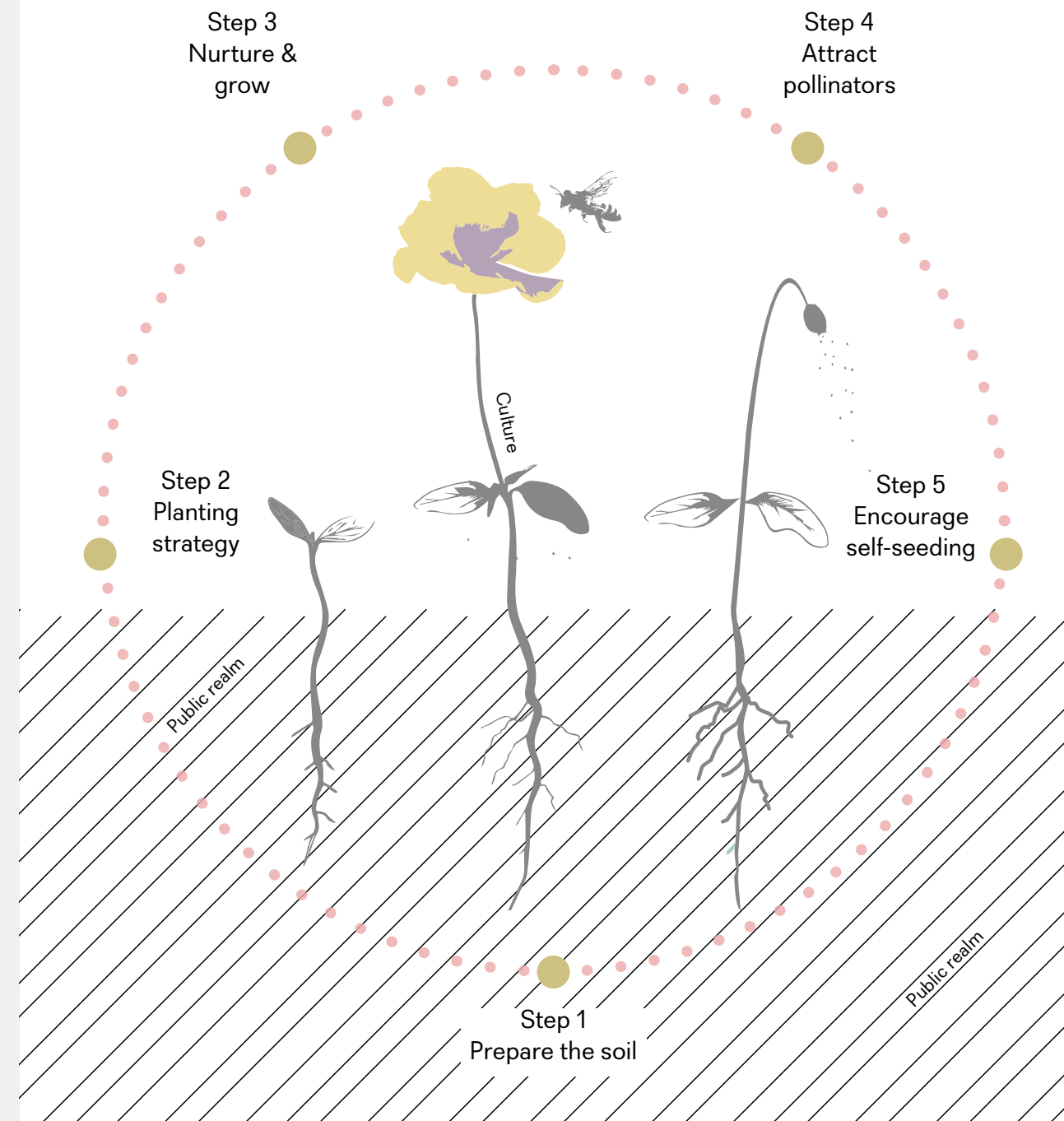


How we will grow Culture

A healthy place-based cultural ecology needs to be planned and curated, with a diversity of well-considered ingredients and a healthy soil in which larger and smaller, established and younger plants can flourish over the long-term. With some rebalancing and just enough interaction, Watford can nurture and celebrate a more curious, creative and connected, sustainable cultural community.

This will better amplify the existing range of assets, nurture each to maximise on their potential, and better combine efforts for mutual benefit and to better provide for the wider community.

Our consultation with cultural providers, individuals and the general public has uncovered great passion and enthusiasm for Watford's creative and cultural life and honed in on areas which will benefit from development which, together with our analysis, has helped us to identify what areas we need to prioritise in this cultural strategy.



A blueprint for a healthy cultural ecology

Priorities

We have identified 4 priorities for culture in Watford and these are woven through all of the focus areas.



Heritage

Valuing what is inherently local

Connected Watford

A vibrant, lively, and well-connected urban hub

Cultural Ladder

Opportunities for people to access a career in culture and the arts

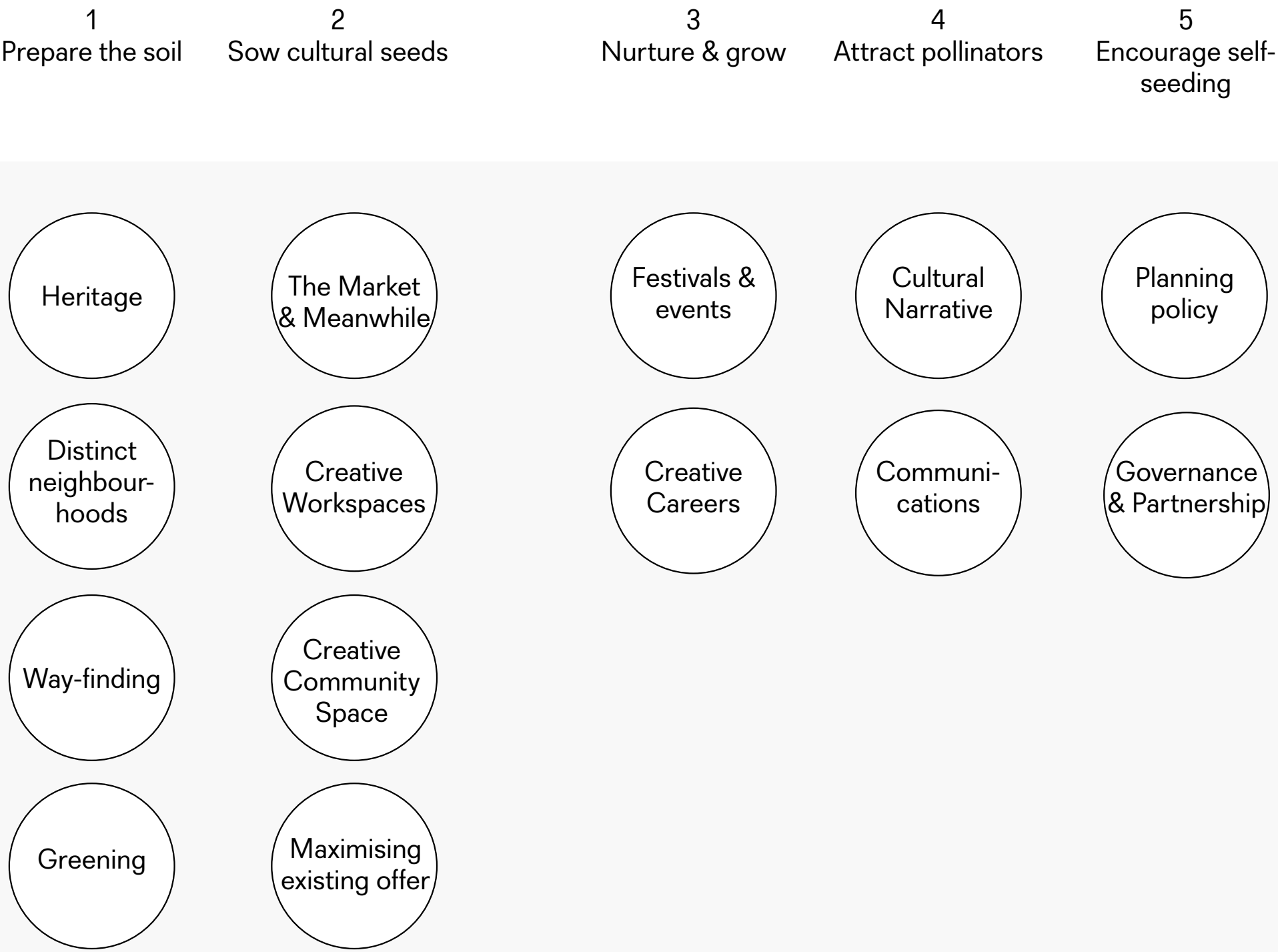
Watford Production House

A place of making & production

Cultural Focus Areas



Cultural Focus Areas



1. Preparing the Soil: Physical Watford

Drawing out Watford's character & creating the right conditions to support a diverse cultural offer



1.1 Heritage & Character

The built environment character and heritage assets of Watford bring the area's history to life and show how the borough has evolved over time. Many distinctive buildings of character are housing cultural venues and businesses, shaping the public realm and parks. They are not, however, currently given prominence in people's perception or daily experience.

Watford Museum's Heritage Lottery funded Our Watford History project brought together many memories and contributions, celebrating what makes Watford special for its past and present communities. Our consultation shows that local people continue to care deeply about Watford's unique heritage and want to celebrate it more visibly.

The Museum is housed in a historic Grade II listed Georgian townhouse, built around 1775 and previously part of Benskins Brewery.



Valuing & celebrating what's inherently local

The townscape would benefit from clearly defined initiatives to reduce visual clutter, draw out the buildings and places which tell the story of Watford's histories and, in doing so, build character and identity.

Identifying and creating more coherent visual hooks would help to express the integral character of the area and aid navigation.



C15 window removed from The Old Compass Inn when it was demolished in 1928 and on display on Market Street.

Right; Oldhams factory, today only the listed Press Hall remains.



Left; Grade I Listed St Mary's Church, circa 800 years old.

Right; Blue plaque on the Watford Colosseum.



Below: the original Watford Palace Theatre building built in 1908.



1.2 Distinct Neighbourhoods

Watford is a walkable place which needs to be made easier to navigate. We want to achieve this through identifying distinct hubs, innovative wayfinding, greening and new visual hooks to bring interest and identity through public art and creative design.

Creating distinct neighbourhoods would encourage strengthening of the distinct qualities for which the area is known. Communicating to visitors Watford's diverse neighbourhoods through way-finding and street-naming gives a positive impression of the range of different experiences that the town has to offer.

The key is to signpost these neighbourhoods at the thresholds at which they overlap, to encourage usual

visitors to one neighbourhood beyond their usual destination.

Consultation with local residents and businesses to establish the identity of each neighbourhood would be critical in ensuring this project is supported and reinforced by the local community and council partners. Thereafter, local events and activities can be curated to align with these neighbourhoods and strengthen this association.

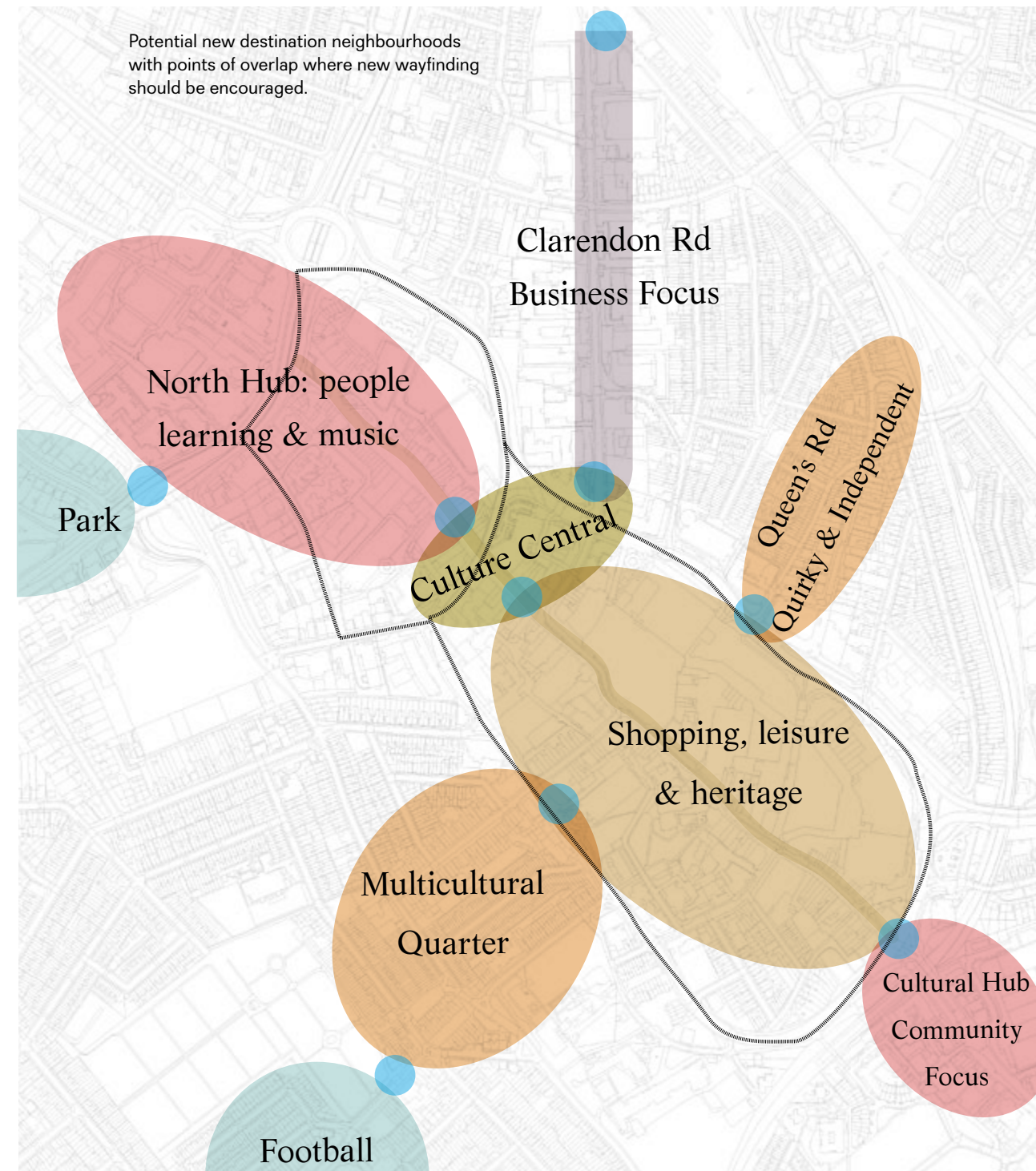
Sari shop on Market Street.



Colourful facade along Queen Street.



Defining Town Centre Areas



1.3 Wayfinding

Good wayfinding helps us to navigate an area easily. This will reinforce the creation of distinct neighbourhoods and help to overcome the perceived 'barrier' of the ring roads. We know that Watford can improve its way-finding to help everyone get around and find what they are looking for more readily, as well as highlight hidden gems and discover things they may not have been aware of before.

Wayfinding includes legible, well-designed spaces with signage and information located where needed. Together with design measures, such as surface treatments, materials and lighting, and interventions such as public art, these combine to create pathways, landmarks and destinations.

Below: In ground wayfinding route leading to the cultural quarter.



Below: Tree grill incorporating text.



Finding Culture, growing audiences

The local community is keen to see creative approaches to shape an engaging experience of the town, including visual arts, design and digital, as well as ensuring that our heritage and cultural venues are highlighted and easier to find. Importantly we also want to make the gateways into and out of Watford more memorable and unique and clearly indicate the main routes around the town centre.

We will draw out and signpost the heritage, cultural and leisure offers to bring better way-finding and welcome visitors to Watford with distinctive creative markers. This could mean heritage inspired public art, bespoke way-finding signage and maps, or digital trails which guide you through the area, highlighting curious corners and points of hidden interest.

Wayfinding will also work to establish the creation of distinct neighbourhood hubs throughout the town centre.

Good public art and inventive public realm design which honours local heritage, can have a transformational impact on our experience and perception of place, especially when developed through community engagement.

Together with the public realm improvements currently underway on the High Street and the Business Improvement District plans for town centre 'welcome guides', these measures will ensure everyone knows they are in Watford.

Below: Typographic bus shelter, Baltimore, USA.



Below: Amsterdam Place branding.



1.4 Greening, softening & animating

Watford's town centre can build on its compactness to commission new permanent and temporary public realm proposals to introduce greening and art to encourage social interaction.

In particular, the High Street is long, stretching from the High Street Station to the south, to West Herts College to the north, past the open pond area on The Parade. Clarendon Road links Watford Junction Station to the High Street at the Palace Theatre, with smaller roads leading from the High Street to smaller scale business and residential areas. Temporary or permanent arts and design initiatives could create more cohesion and areas of interest.

Watford's proximity to London and strong transport connections are enormous strengths. To maximise this, our public realm needs to be more accessible and enjoyable whether on the main routes or smaller local streets. Also we need to help everyone to find and enjoy Watford's heritage, arts, culture, leisure and learning offer.

We have ambition to improve the ring road surrounding the town centre. Meanwhile the High Street public realm is changing and plans are being shaped to make unloved public spaces more dynamic and welcoming.

Carefully considered interventions will further enhance Watford's public realm to encourage people to enjoy pausing in the town centre during the shopping or working day as well as highlight existing green spaces and explore the creation of new pocket parks. Spaces to sit, to enjoy planting and engage in social exchange will bring intimacy and visual delight, encouraging people to dwell and connect with each other.

Crucially, public realm and public art proposals should be developed holistically, to ensure that new projects feed into Watford's cultural narrative and eke out maximum benefit to the community. This may develop as a design guide for all new public realm proposals and a public art strategy that identifies new sites for proposals and potential themes.

Creating opportunities to dwell



Potential sites for new public realm interventions.



Preparing the Soil - Physical Watford



WATFORD UNDERGROUND STATION

North Hub:
People, learning
& music

COLOSSEUM

LIBRARY

Clarendon Rd: Business Focus

WATFORD JUNCTION STATION

Culture Central

WPT

Queen's Rd:
Quirky & Independent

HOLY ROOD

Multicultural
Quarter

INTU CINEMA

ST MARY'S CHURCH

Shopping, leisure
& heritage

WATFORD HIGH STREET STATION

WATFORD MUSEUM
Cultural Hub:
Community Focus

PUMPHOUSE THEATRE
& ARTS CENTRE

Football Hub

WATFORD FOOTBALL CLUB

CASE STUDY:
Marking the Gates, Colchester

This project celebrates Colchester’s heritage and ensures residents and visitors can learn more about the town’s Roman history.

The project identifies four Roman and two Medieval town gates using bronze plaques set into the pavement. The new plaques enable visitors to be able to easily find the sites as they walk through the town.

As well as the plaques, a free trail leaflet has also been developed by Colchester and Ipswich Museums, which plots points of interest around the Roman wall.

Client: Colchester Borough Council & Abellio Greater Anglia
Budget: £40,000
Designer: Dallas-Pierce-Quintero

Above right: Fold-out map marking the walking route and locations of all Roman Gates in Colchester.



Above: North Gate plaque insitu.

Right: Further layer of historical information is located on the reverse.

INTRODUCTION

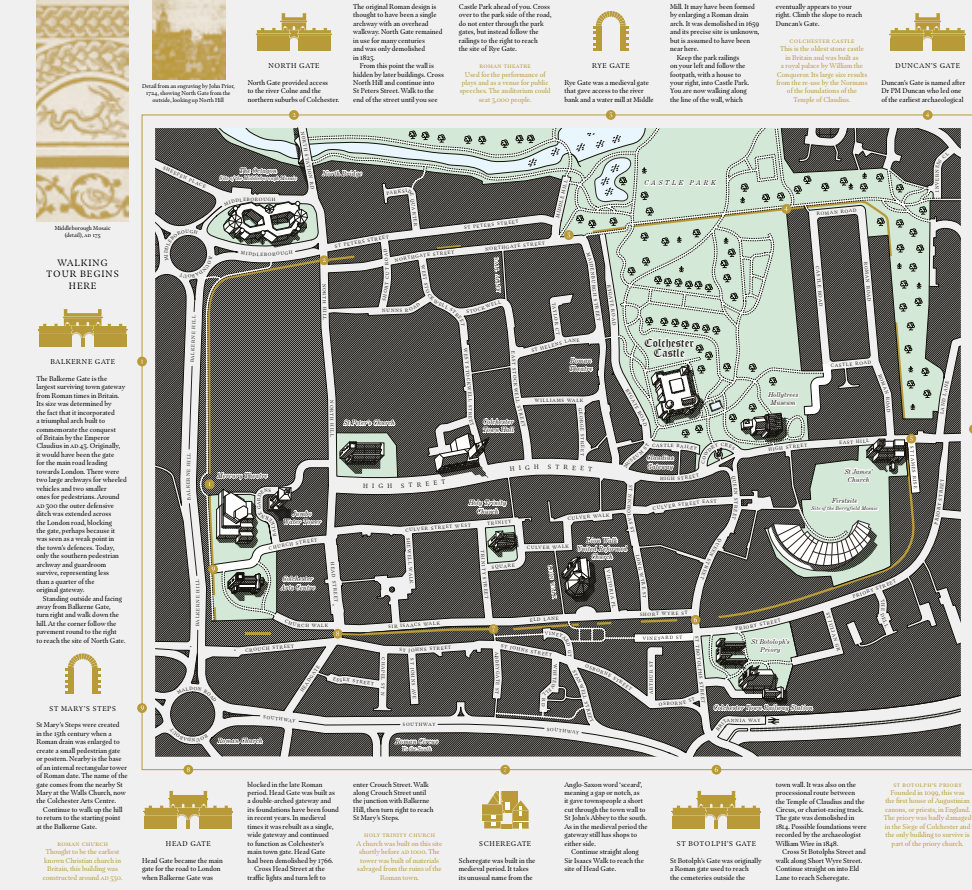
Colchester has the earliest, best preserved and one of the longest Roman town walls in Britain. Its construction began in the period AD 65 to 80 following the destruction of the town during the revolt by Queen Boudica against Roman rule. The entire wall circuit is 2,800 metres, or 1¾ miles, in length and it once stood nearly 6 metres high.



In the Roman period the wall had six gates located at regular intervals. Of these only two survive above ground today: Balmerne Gate and Duncan’s Gate. The locations of the others – North Gate, East Gate, St Botolph’s Gate and Head Gate – are marked by metal plaques and strips set into the pavement. During the medieval period three further gates were added to the wall. Scheragate and St Mary’s Steps are still in use, but no trace of Rye Gate can be seen today. This walking tour starts at Balmerne Gate and takes you around the outside of the wall in a clockwise direction. As well as the gates themselves other significant Roman and medieval sites are passed on the walk. Look out for the distinctive interpretation panels.

THE TOWN WALL IN CLOSE-UP

The Romans constructed the town wall at Colchester not only to defend the inhabitants against attack, but also as a statement of their power. The very significant investment in resources required to build the wall indicated that the Romans were here to stay. At an early stage the Romans must have realised that what is now Essex has no natural, good quality building stone. The wall was therefore constructed of fired clay bricks, flint and septaria, a brittle, easily fractured stone collected from the Essex coast. The wall was built over a foundation trench 3 metres wide and 1.2 metres deep, which was filled with layers of mortar and septaria. Above ground, the wall consisted of three parts: inner and outer faces constructed of courses of clay bricks and stone blocks, ‘dressed’ to a roughly square shape, and an inner core of rubble and mortar. In many places the outer and inner faces have been removed after the Roman period and used in new construction projects in the town so that only the rubble core remains. However, at the best preserved stretch of the wall near Balmerne Gate, the outer face



COLCHESTER
A WALKING
TOUR OF THE
ROMAN AND
MEDIEVAL
GATES



Colchester Museums

CASE STUDY: Town to Port, Colchester

This public realm project celebrates the history of the Hythe, the former trading port of Colchester and encourages visitors to explore the area. A trail of wayfinders and other initiatives tell the story of the disused port, embedding its history within the landscape, and in so doing, strengthening its identity for locals and visitors alike.

Wayfinding and a public art route tell the story of the historic port using wayfinders containing the physical materials that were once traded there.

Client: Essex County Council
Budget: £100,000
Designer: Dallas-Pierce-Quintero

Above: The Firebrick way-finder, one of the 12 installed along the River Colne. Right: oysters within another wayfinder tell a different story of the river.



CASE STUDY: Courtyard, City Hall, Poznan

This modular courtyard serves as a gathering space, open-air amphitheatre or auditorium — the street furniture elements can also be moved out of the way entirely if the whole square is needed.

The seats are also doubled-up, allowing people to sit on a higher or lower tier (or both simultaneously for crowded events). At the same time, the furnishings are sufficiently heavy that no one need worry about someone walking (or rolling) away with them at the end of the evening.

Client: City of Poznan
Designer: Atelier Starzak Strebicki,

Mobile planters transform Poznan's parking into a mobile system combining seating & planting that can be used in a multitude of ways.



CASE STUDY: Fixing the Link, Colchester

The Fixing the Link project is part of the Colchester Station Travel Plan, which encourages station users to travel more sustainably.

Our brief from Colchester Borough Council, Essex County Council and Abellio Greater Anglia was to create a welcoming and exciting first impression on arrival at Colchester Railway Station and transform a challenging public realm into an enjoyable walking route between the station and the town centre.

This public realm project sought to encourage visitors to walk the 20 minute journey to the town centre and offer the opportunity to learn about Colchester's Roman history.

Client: Colchester Borough Council & Abellio Greater Anglia
Budget: £180,000
Designer: Dallas-Pierce-Quintero

Corten elephants mark the arrival to the High Street.



CASE STUDY: Union Street Urban Orchard, London

Designed by Heather Ring of the Wayward Plant Registry and built with the help of Bankside Open Spaces Trust and an array of other helpful volunteers, the garden will regenerate a disused site in Bankside and create a place for exchange between local residents and visitors to the Festival.

During the festival, The Urban Orchard hosted workshops and discussions on urban agriculture: biodiversity and urban food growing, alongside film screenings, musical performances, and local community meetings.

Client: The Architecture Foundation for the London Festival of Architecture
Designer: Heather Ring

Union Street Urban Orchard A pop-up garden and community growing space on a site earmarked for future development.



1 Prepare the soil		ACTIONS	OWNER	COLLABORATORS	NEXT STEPS
Focus Areas	Heritage	Short-term			
		Commission a digital trail to draw out Watford's heritage stories, and attract audiences and aid way-finding	Watford Council / Cultural Consultant	Heritage Service Clock, Syd Nadim MewLab Watford BID	-Identify heritage assets -Create a brief -Determine cost/budget -Identify funding -Commission production
	Distinct neighbourhoods	Produce a Public Art Strategy & Plan	Watford Council / Cultural Consultant	Watford Palace Theatre	-Create a brief -Determine cost/budget -Identify funding -Commission production -Ensure integration with Planning Policy
		Medium-term			
	Way-finding	Commission a family of permanent heritage inspired art, design + greening interventions within the public realm including at key gateways and unloved spaces and to aid wayfinding	CLG / Cultural Consultant	Watford Council Watford Palace Theatre Herts LEP Watford BID Developers	-Create a brief -Determine cost/budget -Identify funding -Commission production
	Greening	Long-term			
		Integrate bespoke creative landscaping and street design throughout all new public realm development & planning policy to build Watford's identity as a creative destination	Watford Council CLG Cultural Consultant	Developers Artists & Designers	-Harness the planning process to require creative elements in new redevelopment & public realm

Short Term – by 31.03.2019; Medium Term – by 31.12.2020; Long Term – 2022

2. Sowing Cultural Seeds

Creating the conditions for diverse culture, creativity and creative enterprise to grow



2.1 The Market & Meanwhile Uses

We feel that there is great potential to re-imagine existing under-performing spaces, such as the market and empty shop-fronts, to provide a low-risk platform for creative entrepreneurs.

Many in Watford's community felt the loss of Charter Place Market deeply. The New Watford Market, located between the High Street and Watford House Lane, has not gelled as a destination. Many stalls are no longer trading, there is little in the way of a buzz and the market lacks a clear identity or purpose, with the physical appearance neither currently attractive or welcoming.

Both local and business communities feel that the market has not successfully transitioned or evolved at the new location. Online feedback shows that the market no longer holds a place in people's hearts and people have turned elsewhere. Despite this, with Watford's changing community and need for more

diverse high street uses, as well as the need for more creative workspace, there's an exciting opportunity to re-imagine the market as a creative enterprise and food hub.

Markets are changing with a plethora of types and styles from antiques and bric a brac, to craft and design or street food, whilst people still enjoy a varied offer for cheaper daily goods. Currently, the more popular markets offer a quality of goods not easily found in high street shops such as handmade and bespoke items.

Working with new partners, a redefined, redesigned and freshly publicised opportunity can focus more on creative business, quality food offer and events



Short-let opportunity for food & creative enterprise

to draw people in as well as ensure an inviting entrance point.

In Watford, people have told us that they want more unique food offerings, more pop up events and animation and more relaxed, quirky places to hang out with colleagues, friends and family in the town centre where there may be small-scale live music or other creative activity.

At the same time, they have said there

is a need for small creative workspace where people can test out new creative enterprise, make and sell goods. With some changed thinking and re-design, the New Watford Market location can be better harnessed to provide both these complimentary offers in the same place and to engage the local community in doing so to build ownership and involvement

Working with the BID, there is potential to expand this concept into the high street, to temporarily activate empty shop-fronts during quiet periods.

Left: Watford Market,
Below: On street fruit stall.



2.2 Creative Workspaces

A healthy cultural ecology requires spaces to experiment, develop and make creative and cultural products whether the performing arts, film, visual arts, crafts or digital applications. Different genres have differing production needs and require spaces which are fit for purpose. In the early stages, all critically require spaces which are affordable.

The Creative Industries Federation identify that the creative industries are the fastest growing part of the UK's economy, and play a significant role in unlocking innovation and growth in other sectors too. This success is fuelled by established international brands all the way through to micro-businesses - and a significant number of self-employed workers and freelancers.

The relationship between creatives and gentrification is well documented, with creative communities often pushed out of an area once development is underway. Across most cities and surrounding areas, rents have increased, pushing out creatives who require lower rents to sustain their practice. Watford has also suffered in this respect with a range of smaller creative spaces being lost in recent years. Creative work space needs to be sustainable through long term lease or up-front purchase agreements, and not be subject to open market rent reviews which can prove catastrophic, often forcing closure. Some creative start-ups, if successful, can move on to higher rents over time but others, such

as most visual artists, don't conform to a standard business model and will usually require ongoing subsidy to be able to practice.

Currently there is a need to improve existing cultural spaces to make them sustainable for the future. As well, there is a lack of affordable space for creative networking and production in Watford and consultation shows there is demand. Models are developing which encourage ways for artists and creatives to become integral and valuable to the local ecology, offering local social benefit in exchange for subsidised rents and / or support to make spaces fit for purpose.

We will identify a series of actions, working collectively to improve existing cultural and creative venues as well as to realise affordable space which will support creative talent and diversify Watford's cultural ecology. Whilst temporary or pop up opportunities are valuable to test new ideas or animate the high street, it is long term and permanent affordable space which will ensure sustainability.

Making space for a thriving creative community



2.3 Creative Community & Exhibition Space

Watford has a range of established cultural venues for professional and community cultural experiences. There are, however, few opportunities for more informal engagement or participation in visual arts, crafts or making to be hosted and enjoyed. It is hard to find spaces to exhibit or present work or to learn in more informal settings and nowhere in the heart of the town centre.

Locally we understand that the lack of such opportunities is detrimental for creatives wanting to develop their careers, and so for the growth of local creative enterprise.

At the same time, creatives wanting to share their skills and expertise need space to do so and people interested in developing creative skills, or just take part in creative learning for personal development, will benefit from doing so.

Below: Arts events at Dulwich Picture Gallery.



Below: College exhibition at Watford Museum.



The go-to for creative activity in the community

A visible accessible space within the town centre will facilitate a multitude of needs, providing exhibition, selling, making and learning space in a welcoming community hub.

'Good things are happening here' will be realised. Such spaces will harness and amplify the energy and talents of local individuals and groups, creating a sense of vibrancy.

At the same time, this provision will encourage a more diverse footfall into the town centre and animate the high street. Together with a series of cultural initiatives in the public realm and better communications, the message that

Below: Turning Earth Open Studio event.



2.4 Maximising existing offers

Change is in the air in Watford as plans are on the table to refurbish or extend all of the existing major venues. This coincidence is a fantastic opportunity to review the future cultural offer in Watford and include a variety of spaces to further benefit existing providers and support new activities and audiences. There currently exists a lack of activities on offer for young people, and creating welcoming, safe and creative new spaces will help to fill this gap.

The Museum is currently preparing an HLF lottery bid for a new extension and internal refurbishment, which will include a cafe and new displays. The proposed works will help expand the audience base, and especially cater for primary schools. A temporary exhibition space on the ground floor will create an easily accessible point of interest and encourage repeat visits.

The site upon which Watford Palace Theatre's scenic workshop is located will be developed and its relocation is vital to allow WPT to continue to operate as a producing house. A site adjacent to the Pump House Theatre is on offer, and a combined project could facilitate a much needed refurbishment of the Pump House, also providing an active 'making space', creating



Left: Visualisation of the proposed extension at Watford Museum.

Right: Scenic workshop.

Supporting the growth of existing cultural operators

apprenticeships. This would strengthen Watford's cultural capital - establishing this part of Watford as a Community & Cultural Hub and bringing wider training and job opportunities.

In addition to providing new spaces, the Pump House and Museum building projects represent a fantastic opportunity to commission high-quality architectural designs which will complement the existing building whilst providing exciting new spaces to enjoy.

The Colosseum also falls under this category as it will undergo refurbishment to its roof, during which time programming is likely to stop.

Consideration and planning as to how these venues continue to operate during the refurbishment works is required and represent an opportunity for these organisations to temporarily relocate and during this time attract new audiences, while retaining existing audiences through continued programming.



CASE STUDY: Netil Market, London

Netil Market offers design, food and music. Open daily, it is part of the creative community based nearby at Netil House that provides space to local designers. As well as a dozen permanent stands – among them a bike mechanic, a coffee roaster, a vintage glasses shop and a florist – there are stalls that move in every Saturday, selling mainly crafts, clothes and contemporary homewares. Street food on offer varies from Taiwanese baps to homemade pasta and Caribbean BBQ. Netil House Radio has also recently launched broadcasting from one of the containers.

Client: EAT WORK ART

Netil Market, linked to the creative community at EAT WORK ART.



CASE STUDY: Pop Brixton, London

Pop Brixton is an original project that supports local jobs, training and enterprise. It is a community initiative that has transformed a disused plot of land into a pioneering space that showcases the most exciting independent businesses from Brixton and Lambeth, providing a new destination that supports them to set up shop and share space, skills and ideas. As well as providing the space local businesses need to thrive, Pop Brixton works with members to make a positive difference in the community, investing in charitable projects and providing free space for community events, including regular open workshops in the arts & horticulture.

Client: Lambeth Council
Designer: Carl Turner

Pop Brixton, a destination for new business, affordable workspaces, innovation and community schemes, with food, drink and retail outlets.



CASE STUDY: Turning Earth, London

Turning Earth E10 is a new centre for ceramics that opened in the Lee Valley in March 2017, in the 8,500 sq ft top floor of an old hardware factory.

The centre includes a large open-plan membership studio where part-time professional makers, serious hobbyists and beginners work together in a community environment, with the benefit of shared facilities. The space also includes a classroom for ceramics courses for those new to the craft, where 13 courses a week are taught by professional artists.

Two locations at Walthamstow & Hoxton



Turning Earth's new studio on a light industrial site in Walthamstow.

CASE STUDY: Hackney City Farm, London

Hackney City Farm is a both a community and educational resource, established to give local people, particularly young people, experience of animals. The Farm also runs educational projects, exhibitions, courses in crafts and farm trails. Classes in pottery and upholstery are run in the evening, plus pottery on Sunday afternoon and play schemes for the local community at Easter and during the summer.



Children's pottery at Hackney City Farm.

CASE STUDY: Playhouse Derry, Northern Ireland

The Playhouse in Derry was a £4.6M restoration and extension of two dilapidated listed school buildings, prominently located in the cultural quarter and on the city wall.

The project delivered a new theatre, green room, dance studio, gallery, cafe space, community and education rooms and administration spaces. Crucially, the addition of a new stairwell and lifts solved accessibility issues. The project also included the commission of 2 new integrated art works which were displayed within the building fabric itself.

Client: Playhouse theatre
Architects: Andrzej Blonksi Architects:
Project Architect: Juliet Quintero
Budget: £3.4M (HLF & other sources)

Winner of BURA award for best practice in Regeneration 2009

Playhouse Theatre; Listed School buildings, Gallery, Green Rooms & Dance Studio.



2 Sow cultural seeds

Focus Areas

The Market

Creative workspaces

Creative Community Space

Maximising existing offer

ACTIONS

OWNER

COLLABORATORS

NEXT STEPS

Short-term

Reposition New Watford Market as a creative enterprise & food hub with a seasonal night-time creative social offer (& heat lamps)

Watford Council

Watford BID
Herts LEP
Freeholders / Leaseholders
Local creatives
Amma Gyan

Short Term
-Identify an experienced creative market partner e.g. Meanwhile Space, Boxpark, Space Makers
-Devise a management model & business plan to include occupier criteria e.g. public engagement, work v selling days
-Scope costings
-Identify funding to subsidise units
-Commission re-design with internal public space, welcoming entrance

Medium Term
-Contract market management company
-Lease units to creative and food providers
-Launch and promotion

Establish a detailed plan for the redevelopment of Watford's key cultural infrastructure
Watford Museum / Watford Palace Theatre / Production Space / Pump House Theatre and Arts Centre / Watford Colosseum

Watford Council / Museum
Watford Palace Theatre
Pump House Theatre and Arts Centre
Consultants

Heritage Lottery Fund
Arts Council England
Cultural Champions

Short Term
- Agreement amongst cultural providers to share proposed development plans, aspirations & space requirements and identify opportunities for shared use of proposed new facilities to be incorporated into new briefs.
- Review development programme and management of temporary relocation to retain audience and as a marketing opportunity to attract new users.
-Submit Watford Museum HLF bid, ensuring high quality design offers best use of space
-Finalise Feasibility Plan to provide new WPT Production Space & improvements to PHT, ensuring proposals are ambitious & deliverable
-Establish a funding plan

Medium
-Fundraise and deliver proposals

Long Term
-All proposals delivered

Short Term – by 31.03.2019; Medium Term – by 31.12.2020; Long Term – 2022

2
Sow cultural seeds

ACTIONS

OWNER

COLLABORATORS

NEXT STEPS

Focus Areas

The Market

Creative
workspaces

Creative
Community
Space

Maximising
existing offer

Medium-term

Identify an existing or new build space with a café in or close to the town centre - for creatives and wider community to make, present and sell work, learn skills, 'have a go' and network

Watford Council
Watford BID

CLG
Amma Gyan
Creative & Food Business
The LP Café
Music Partners
Developers
LEP

-Scope space options
-Identify space management partners e.g. ACAVA, MillCo Project, Bow Arts working with local artists /makers
-Develop business and funding plan

Identify how to provide one or more teen youth focused space/activity in the town centre e.g. youth focused café, teen shelter, alcohol-free club evenings, outdoor silent disco

Watford Council
Watford BID
intu

CLG
The LP Café
Syd Nadim, Clock
Chris Luff
Watford clubs
Big Events

-Scope ways to better engage and provide for YP in Watford through programming, with partners. Including via Big Events programme, improved promotion to YP, creating opportunities for YP to lead or inform activity

Short Term – by 31.03.2019; Medium Term – by 31.12.2020; Long Term – 2022

3. Nurture & Support Growth

Creating opportunities for cultural and creative participation and production to flourish



3.1 Festivals & Cultural Events

We will build on Watford's successful festivals and event programmes and support fledgling events to animate the borough and drive footfall across the year.

Watford boasts an impressive calendar of festivals and events: Watford Palace Theatre's Imagine Watford festival brings world-class outdoor arts to Watford; Rifco Arts' British Asian Festival is a popular annual programme; whilst the Big Events and the BID's Food & Drink Week are popular events in the public calendar.

There is scope to review how creative programming is spread throughout the year, to maximise publicity and attendance. Consultation has demonstrated keen interest in seeing

a large local annual event bringing the whole community together in a creative and diverse multicultural celebration. This could take the form of a new event, or by maximising existing programmed events, such as the West Watford Festival to promote these as key opportunities for local people to create & participate.

Cinema is returning to the town with a new multi-plex and IMAX at Intu. Local film makers, such as BAFTA nominated Mewlab, are making and presenting new work. A Watford Short Film



Left: The Weathermen by Kate Flatt Projects, at Imagine Watford 2018.
Below: Flyer for Record Store Day, delivered by LP Cafe.



Growing Emerging Cultural & Community Activity

Festival is evolving. The Palace Theatre is establishing a Young Filmmakers Festival, adding to their streaming of professional cultural productions. Together with the summer Big Screen events, these activities - with support and more effective coherent promotion - will fuel Watford's reputation as a centre for film, building on the nearby Warner Bros Studios Leavesdon, Elstree Film Studios and the National Film and TV School.

As well as the larger established music and film provision, a more grassroots scene is allowing new work to be shared with audiences in Watford. Pubs like The Horns, The White Lion and The Flag and creative entrepreneurs such as new music promoters The LP Café and

Papermouth are building a reputation for innovation and a more niche offer, adding to jazz and folk on offer at the Pump House.

This burgeoning music scene could be further nurtured, showcasing new talent in other venues and publicising gigs to new audiences. There is the potential to grow a Watford Fringe which could be a hub for the borough's creative talent each autumn.

All these different activities will bring things in from the edge, encourage experimentation and test new ideas and create opportunities for younger creatives to develop practical experience and confidence.

Below: New logo for Watford Short Film Festival, commencing in 2018.



Below: Flyer for Watford Fringe 2017.



3.2 Creative Careers & volunteering

The Creative Industries Federation state: “With increasing automation...future demand for creative and technical skills will be high and we must ensure our world-leading industries maintain their competitive edge as well as helping young people, teachers, careers advisers, and parents better understand the range of creative jobs and entrepreneurial opportunities that are possible, and how to pursue them.”

Watford is well placed to harness the creative and cultural opportunities in the borough to support young people into creative careers and to develop their personal creativity. West Herts College in Watford offers good creative and media courses with excellent facilities and there are a range of cultural and creative activities available for young people, such as those at Watford Palace Theatre,



Access to cultural opportunities

The Dan Tien and Herts Inclusive Theatre.

The UK's Creative Industries need continued access now, and in the future, to the skills and talent they require, and young people and families need to be able to access clear quality pathways to training and employment. This is best facilitated through strategic initiatives such as raising awareness of what's on offer through schools and in the community, whether through training programmes or networks bringing professional and non-professional creative communities together.

The emerging Hertfordshire Cultural Education Partnership is a platform which partners in Watford can build on locally with a focus on STEAM-related skills and careers and the way in which engagement in creativity builds a broad range of soft skills like self-esteem and design-thinking.

Watford is reputed to be a very giving place, with many people giving up time or funds to charitable causes. A short period of volunteering in the arts could help introduce newcomers into the sector, offering an insight into the industry, and if possible the volunteering would be linked to an enrichment activity which would add a further layer

Left: Design session with artists NEON on the development of a new temporary pavilion for the Pump House Gallery in Battersea.

Below: Lobbylive at the Colosseum provides a platform to showcase talent, by entertaining audiences in Watford Colosseum's foyer.



3 Nurture & grow

Focus Areas

Festivals & events

Creative Careers

ACTIONS

OWNER

COLLABORATORS

NEXT STEPS

Short-term

Develop and establish a Watford Film Festival as a key date in Watford's cultural calendar – to develop talent and attract footfall to Watford (bringing together the Short Film festival and the Young Film Festival) and consolidate Watford's strength in film

Watford Palace Theatre
Pump House Theatre & Arts Centre
James Dyer
Watford Council

Warner Bros
Watford Council
intu
New Cinema

- Agree a Film Watford programming strand
- Bring together WPT and PHT work & joint promotion
- Engage Watford Colosseum as partner and consider how music (e.g. film scores/ silent cinema) can add to the programme
- Engage intu & cinema partner re support

Develop Watford Fringe as a hotbed of local creative talent for all ages, across the borough - ensuring wide appeal and, including fund-raising to support local talent with a high quality creative event at the heart

CLG/Fringe Producer
Pump House Theatre & Arts Centre
Watford Palace Theatre

Arts Council England
Watford Palace Theatre
Watford Colosseum
Watford Council
West Herts College
Watford Schools
Watford BID
Mewlab
LP Café
Papermouth

- Engage with World Fringe Network to develop the Watford Fringe
- Establish a WF Advisory Group to support promotion and open up participation across Watford
- Consider developing a strategic commission to raise ambition & promote the fringe

Create opportunities for cultural volunteering

CLG/Fringe Producer
Pump House Theatre & Arts Centre
Watford Palace Theatre

Pump House Theatre
Cultural Leaders Group

- Develop a shared culture volunteering programme as a pathway to employment or engagement for all ages, but with a youth focus

Build on Watford as a place of emerging music. Encourage & support local grassroots, professional and community initiatives including schools, orchestras, bands and choirs via, for example, Own The Stage and Record Store Day

CLG
Watford Council

Watford Music Service
Watford Palace Theatre
Watford Coliseum
West Herts College
Watford Schools
Watford BID
Mewlab
LP Café / Papermouth

- Work with existing providers to explore collaboration and communication strategy
- Emphasize a music production narrative through communications and within programming
- Consider identifying designated busking spots through Watford

Short Term – by 31.03.2019; Medium Term – by 31.12.2020; Long Term – 2022

3
Nurture & grow

Focus Areas

Festivals & events

Creative Careers

ACTIONS

OWNER

COLLABORATORS

NEXT STEPS

Medium-term

Participate in
Herts Year of Culture 2020

CLG
Watford Council

All partners

-Identify Watford's aims (raising profile of current activity, bespoke activity or a visitor promotion)
-Identify and plan how Watford will participate

Building on Hertfordshire's Cultural Education Partnership, devise & pilot a plan to create more opportunities for young people in Watford to access local culture, raise awareness of creative careers, develop creative skills & access to workplace experience

CLG/Consultant
West Herts College
Watford Palace Theatre

ROH Bridge
Watford Council
Watford Schools
Warner Bros
Creative Business e.g.
Mewlab

-Scope appetite to build a Watford / West Herts Cultural Education Partnership (CEP) including with Watford Schools to e.g. Identify, grow and promote creative career experiences including digital
-Develop a culture guide for YP in Watford (see Communicate & Attract)
-Explore WH College as a National Saturday Club partner to create tangible pathway opportunities for 30 YP a year with a credible partner
-Support existing planned initiatives such a WPT Shop Town community theatre production

Long-term

Increase opportunities for young people in Watford to access local culture, raise awareness of creative careers, develop creative skills & access workplace experience

Watford Council /
Watford Palace Theatre
(new funded role)

ROH Bridge
Herts CC
Watford Council
Watford Schools
Warner Bros
Creative Business

-Assess progress and ensure evaluation

Short Term – by 31.03.2019; Medium Term – by 31.12.2020; Long Term – 2022

4. Attract pollinators

Encouraging new audiences
& promoting creative
Watford



4.1 Cultural Narrative: Watford Production House

From farming and brewing, to silk, paper making, engineering and printing, Watford has always been a place of making and production. Now Watford is at the heart of Hertfordshire's international film, TV and media industry where, alongside Warner Bros Leavesden, over 1000 creative media companies are based. (www.hertfordshire.gov.uk).

Smaller creative companies are setting up in Watford, attracted by lower rents and proximity to the capital, such as the Bafta nominated animation house MewLab. Building a cultural narrative based on this recognised Watfordian trait of 'making', encompasses both historic activities and future aspirations.



We make music
We make film
We make theatre
We make goals
We make Watford

Diverse contemporary theatre companies make, present and tour excellent new work, sharing skills with the next generation. A vibrant grassroots music scene in pubs and venues is building on Watford's musical heritage which includes great classical music stars, from Pavarotti and Callas to Menuhin and Rattle, who have been hosted by the Colosseum, now home of the BBC Concert Orchestra.

Left to right: Print works, Watford Football Club, The Harry Potter Experience, Rifco Theatre Company performance.



Local success stories include Geri Halliwell, Bruce Gilbert of Punk Band The Wire and The Staves. A new generation of talent is coming through supported by local music producer Papermouth, pubs, events like Own The Stage, the Colosseum's Live Lounge and Record Store Day, led by lively vinyl and live music venue The LP Cafe.

Sport is also in Watford's DNA, drawing crowds and producing numerous successful sports people from the boxing Buxton Brothers to footballers John Barnes and Luther Blissett. Watford Rovers formed in 1881 and by 1922 Vicarage Road was the home of Watford Football Club 'The Hornets'.

Watford's cultural narrative needs to encompass these many different threads, whilst being flexible to Watford's future. The Watford Production House/ We Make/ Made in Watford... theme picks up all of these and conveys a positive and active description of Watford and its people.



4.2 Communications

Ensuring everyone can easily find out what's happening, where and when, is key to the cultural success of places, building identity and growing sustainable creative communities. Currently there is no single source of information to find out about arts, culture and heritage activities in and around Watford.



Online, print, physical

Thousands of people pass in and out of Watford every day, to work, shop, visit or stop en-route to other nearby locations. Watford's football matches and the Warner Brothers Studio Tour - The Making of Harry Potter at Leavesden, attract significant numbers of visitors from all over the world.

More effective communication about culture in Watford will shine a light on the range of available activity. It will encourage residents, workers and visitors to explore new areas, take part in diverse events and raise Watford's profile as a place for culture.

Effective accessible communication will identify audiences and diverse communication channels, ensuring a range of opportunities for reaching different stakeholders, including those who are digitally literate and those who rely on more conventional methods of communication. Watford's printing legacy could be a rich starting point to build on, developing an events publication which is distributed across these different channels.

As part of a multi-faceted audience development approach, cultural programming plays an important role in reaching diverse audiences and inspiring engagement and repeat visits. More bespoke initiatives like street arts, culture town criers and illustrated culture-zones can diversify the message and the audience.



Above: the Museum offers a wide range of activities but these are not all reflected in current advertising.

Left: leaflet produced by LP Cafe for 2018 Record Store Day.



CASE STUDY: Southbank Centre

North has designed a new visual identity & font for the Southbank Centre, inspired by its Brutalist architect and the original Festival of Britain identity. The re-brand also uses yellow as the core colour.



CASE STUDY: Love Camden

"Love Camden is your go-to guide for a great time out. Created for and by residents, visitors and local businesses that know the ins- and outs."

The website features a calendar of events, films, art commissions, and a multitude of "Top 10.." guides.



CASE STUDY: This is Brent

Made for Brent's winning bid for the London Borough of Culture 2020, this short film celebrates the borough's diversity, vibrancy and creativity.



Cultural
NarrativeCommuni-
cations

ACTIONS

OWNER

COLLABORATORS

NEXT STEPS

Short-term

Align the Destination Branding and Management Strategy with the Cultural Strategy & ensure culture is at the heart

Watford Council

CLG
Watford BID

- CLG to engage closely with the Destination brand project
- Ensure branding design is effective for culture
- Build on this work with the other Communicate and Attract Actions

Devise and implement a plan to enhance communications about culture in Watford

Watford Council
WPT / Watford BIDCLG
Newsquest
intu

- Produce communication plan to better promote Watford's creative and cultural offer ensuring it can reach a diverse audience including young people (see below)
- Ensure different mechanisms to reach diverse audiences and participants e.g. what's on website, digital app, enhanced social media e.g. Creative Watford Twitter @watfordculture

Commission public creative projects to promote local cultural events – e.g. a seasonal printed 'Watford Culture Chronicle' and bespoke culture information panels with changing information

Watford Council /
Watford BIDCLG
Watford BID

- Determine how these projects will be led & funded
- Link to Public Realm Way-finding initiatives and Public Art Strategy
- Establish a brief
- Ensure accessible creative design and artistic quality

Produce a young people's guide and resource about culture and creativity in Watford

Watford Council
Watford BID
West Herts College

CAN

- Plan how to emphasise a music production narrative through communications fddand within programming
- Consider identifying designated busking spots through Watford

Medium-term

Develop Cultural Champions and Ambassadors

CLG / CAN

All

- Identify if any individuals with Watford connections would be prepared to act as local culture champion e.g. Mary Portas & involve in early development
- Consider developing community culture champions as part of volunteering programme

Short Term – by 31.03.2019; Medium Term – by 31.12.2020; Long Term – 2022

5. Encourage self-seeding

Ensuring Watford's cultural future



5.1 Planning for Culture

Councils plan for housing, health, education and transport but also for cultural well-being, aiming to provide community and cultural facilities and services to meet local needs. Planning for culture, arts and sport takes place within a context of policy and strategic plans.

Pro-active planning for culture can support local cultural infrastructure and other cultural opportunities. This may include subsidised spaces, creative workspace, such as artist studios, and a wide range of public art typologies.

Watford will explore and develop how to develop policy to build the borough's cultural offer, creating more opportunities for all.

Watford – the road to success

Phase 1 – High Street & Clarendon Road (Palace)

- Town centre footfall between 2m & 2.5m per month (fallen since intn development started)
- 1,000 vehicles/day use this part of High Street
- Conflict of users – not sure who has priority
- Issues of public safety



Harnessing Planning Policy

The opportunity exists for Watford's planning framework to support and enhance the range of local cultural provision, through subsidised space and cultural contributions in new development, which meets local need. For instance, consultation has shown that more affordable creative workspace is needed for local people wanting to make and show their work.

Nationally, it is necessary to become more creative about how to fund arts and culture by building a diversity of approaches. At the same time, planning for culture helps to embed creative provision for the long term by looking to an area's Local Plan and policies. The UK's Planning Framework requires councils to make provision for the cultural well-being of communities.

Around the country, especially in towns and cities, cultural facilities, creative workspace, public arts and community engagement are being provided through redevelopment, to enhance local provision, create employment opportunities and support place shaping. The many health and well-being benefits of engagement in culture are also valued.

In this way, an evolving arts and culture provision becomes hard wired into an area's DNA, providing for the cultural needs of the local community.

Left: Phase 1 Public Realm proposals for Watford High Street & Clarendon Rd.

Below: Phase 4 Public Realm proposals for Clarendon Rd.



5.2 Governance & Partnerships

In the 2017 report: Improving Places, the Arts Council and the Mayor of London emphasised how Business Improvement Districts, local authorities and cultural organisations increasingly work together to help places to thrive. Successful partnerships boost the economy, bring people together through creative programming, promote tourism and civic pride and revitalise neighbourhoods.

Councils and local partners have a pivotal role; to broker connections, identify opportunities for activity and funding, and to galvanise efforts. Key to success is joint working to achieve shared aspiration, with clear governance mechanisms. Culture champions, conveners, enablers and producers are all welcome.



Enabling the creative conversation to flow

Our Cultural Vision will be driven by a strategic Cultural Strategy Group, working together to implement, broker and fund delivery of a series of cultural actions.

An independent Strategic Culture Lead role will be piloted, providing additional capacity and expertise, to galvanise outcomes.

A new Creative Watford Forum will provide a space for anyone interested in being involved with Watford's cultural life to network, partner and share information.

Opportunities will be created to bring the two together, to share ambition, information and develop working partnerships. Project teams can lead specific activity, made up of representatives from across the spectrum.



CASE STUDY: The GAP, Wisbech

This project forms part of a Heritage Lottery Bid to improve the high street in Wisbech. The proposal, which has received planning and Stage 2 Heritage Lottery Fund funding will create a new public realm & community event space with a rooftop viewing platform.

Whilst the project is conceived as a temporary (10 yr) project, the steelwork is designed to be permanent and can be incorporated into future development of the site.

The project has the support of Historic England as an interesting and playful addition to the street-scape in Wisbech' town centre and conservation area.



Client: Fenland District Council
Designer: Dallas-Pierce-Quintero

CASE STUDY: Culture & Business Fund Scotland

This fund encourages businesses to sponsor arts and heritage activity within Scotland and support arts and heritage organisations to build new business sector partnerships. If an arts or heritage organisation attracts an eligible business to sponsor an aspect of their work, the Culture & Business Fund Scotland will match that sponsorship, £ for £.



<http://www.aandbscotland.org.uk/culture-and-business-fund-scotland/>

CASE STUDY: City of Sydney

Responding to community demand for more street art to enliven the streets, the City of Sydney created the creative hoardings program.

The City's hoarding and scaffolding policy and guidelines require the use of creative graphics on temporary structures in high traffic areas.



Head On Hoarding Sydney

CASE STUDY: Battersea Exchange, London

The development and implementation of a Cultural Strategy and new public artworks forms part of the S106 obligations for this new mixed-use development. New temporary and permanent artworks are developed in partnership with the local school, providing hands-on workshops for the pupils, and creating a sense of ownership over their built environment.



5
Encourage self-seeding

Focus Areas



ACTIONS

OWNER

COLLABORATORS

NEXT STEPS

Short-term

Refresh Governance to support effective delivery of the Cultural Strategy

Watford Council / CLG / CAN

CLG / CAN

-CLG to become Watford Culture Strategy Group (CSG) to support and broker delivery of the strategy aims and actions. Review membership and invite other NPOs.

-Refresh Community Arts Network as Creative Watford Network (CWN) to bring together anyone interested to support and nurture Watford's creative future

-CSG and CWN to meet 1-2 times a year to network and review progress of the CS

-Appoint a freelance Culture Lead role with responsibility for galvanising and progressing the Cultural Strategy and Action Plan

Plan for a digital future by harnessing technology to increase access to Watford

CLG / Watford Council

Watford BID
Clock
Warner Bros
Mewlab

-See previous actions i.e. increasing young peoples creative and digital skills, creating a digital heritage trail and producing a culture website/Watford website section and appealing creative social media

Medium-term

Embed culture within Watford Council's local planning policy to generate enhanced public realm, more affordable creative space and funding for local activities

Watford Council / Consultant

Watford BID
Clock
Warner Bros
Mewlab

-Define steps needed to integrate arts & culture through the Watford Local Plan to reflect the Culture Strategy and Public Art Strategy and lever investment through S106/CIL
-Consider creation of Watford Cultural Planning Guidance
-If required, commission specialist work

Long-term

Review the Cultural Strategy against progress to plan ahead

Watford Council / CLG

Watford BID
Clock
Warner Bros
Mewlab

-Build in progress measures to evaluate success
-Plan ahead beyond the current strategy for continuity

Short Term – by 31.03.2019; Medium Term – by 31.12.2020; Long Term – 2022

Consultation

In the development of this piece of work, we have held workshops with the Cultural Steering Group, Cultural Leaders Group, the Community Arts Network and students from West Herts College.

In addition, we held meetings with key stakeholders including Warner Bros, Watford BID and all main cultural venues. To reach out more widely, we produced an online questionnaire and held two public open day events.



Public consultation

In order to connect with differing sections of the community, in particular North Watford and West Watford, we delivered mobile consultation events, with the added attraction of popcorn. We were keen to speak to both visitors and residents, for whom we programmed sessions both on a weekday and a weekend.

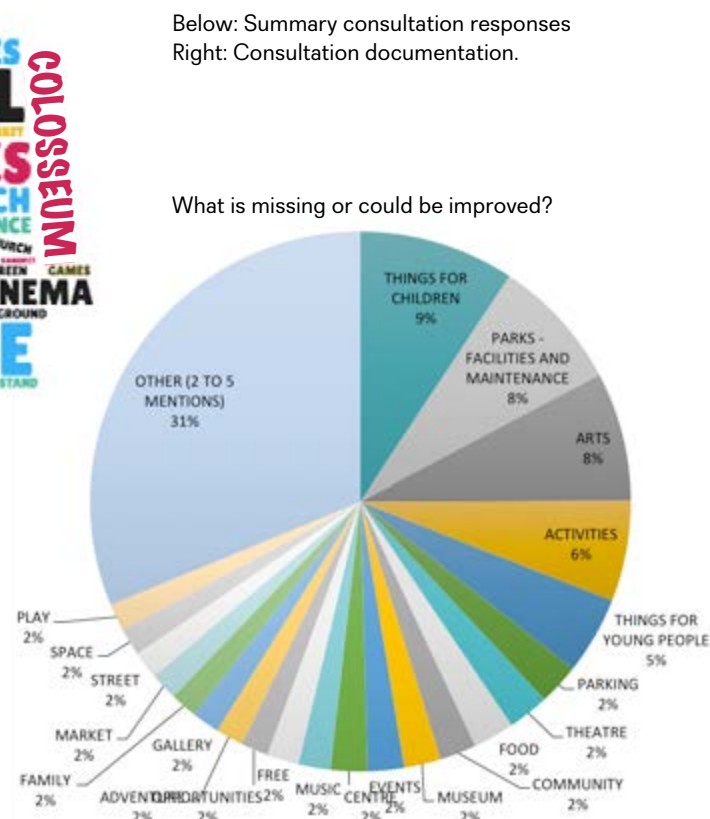
The consultation events took place at Cassiobury Park, Harwoods Adventurous Playground, Watford Leisure Centre Central, St Mary's Church and in Callowland Recreation Ground.

The purpose of the consultation was to collect feedback from Watford's general public in relation to:

- Watford's perceived identity
- Their engagement with cultural activities within Watford (what they participate in and what is missing)
- Testing the emerging themes of the Cultural Strategy.



What do you enjoy doing in Watford?



Below: Summary consultation responses
Right: Consultation documentation.



Online questionnaire

The online questionnaire was shared amongst the wider Community Arts Network and asked 14 questions on arts & culture in Watford to help inform our strategy. Here is a selection:

Q3 - Feel free to tell us more about why arts and culture in Watford are important to you.

"Arts broaden the mind and make us think about things differently, as well as entertaining us. It's amazing having more art and arts events in Watford, not having to travel to find these things. I grew up hating the town, now I love it because of the wealth of creativity I've found here."

"Watford is a hive of different tastes or culture, music and arts, for a town with such diversity it's important to embrace and explore all aspects of this."

"Watford needs creativity to help hold onto its character and to make it a town that people want to visit."

"They bring people and communities together, those who otherwise would never have reason to be in contact with each other."

Q4. How would you rate Watford in terms of the quality, vibrancy and availability of arts & culture?

There was a huge variety in responses, from 100% to 0%, the average was 55%

Q8. What sorts of people are least catered for in arts and culture activities available in Watford?

Top three results: 'Teenagers'/'Talented people who need to develop their career'/'People on low incomes'.

Q11. Give us your views on wayfinding in the town centre and the experience of the High Street.

"I feel there are a lot of things that are tucked away and not much signage around to advertise this"

"There is no Wayfinding or connection and the ring road creates a negative impression."

"Perhaps some sort of decorative 'arts trail' on the ground that takes people to the museum and other arts space would be nice."

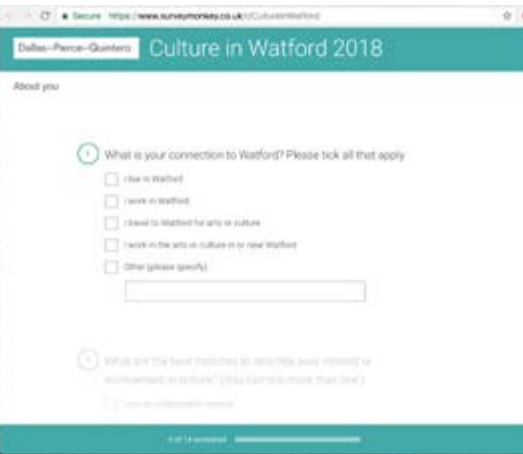
"Centre for new businesses that are creative. Better Market - Street food"

"Provision for non profit making venues and cultural spaces."

"A central centre for gigs, art exhibitions etc. No real centre for the arts currently"

"Terrible at the moment but hopefully greatly improved when the new development is completed."

Below: Online questionnaire portal
www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/CultureinWatford.



List of consultees

Group meetings & workshops:

Cultural Strategy Steering Group:

Watford Borough Council
Warner Bros.
Watford Palace Theatre
BID
Pump House Theatre

Cultural Leaders Group

Watford Borough Council
Warner Bros.
Watford Palace Theatre
BID
Pump House Theatre
BBC Concert Orchestra
West Herts College
Watford Leisure Centre
Watford Colosseum
Arts Council SE
Hertfordshire Library Services
Watford Football Club

Community Arts Network

Individuals including artists and creative practitioners & organisation, including
Herts Inclusive Theatre
The Dan Tien
WRAP

West Herts College students

Watford Borough Council
Communications & Economic Development

Watford Borough Council
Regeneration and Planning

Three Rivers Trust

Individual conversations:

Watford Palace Theatre

Watford Museum / Heritage and Arts Development Team

Pump House Theatre & Arts Centre

Rifco

BID

intu

Warner Bros. Studios, Leavesden

Clock

Reliance Group

Royal Opera House Bridge SE

LP Café

West Herts College

Herts Libraries / Watford Library

Amanartis

Watford Colosseum

BBC Concert Orchestra

Vist Herts / Going Places

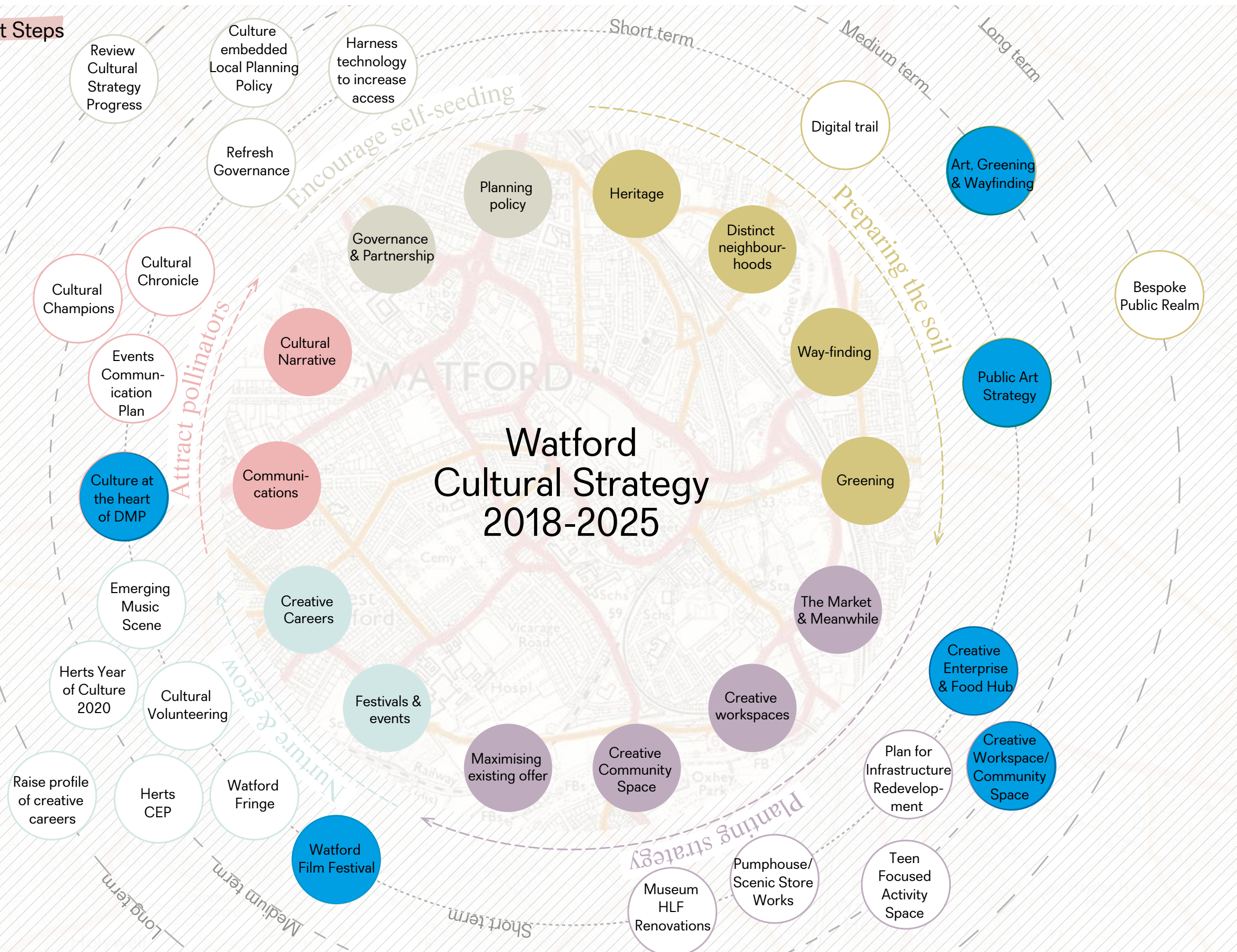
Watford Film Festival

Below: Feedback from Community Arts Network meeting, in response to question over how arts and culture can contribute to the town centre experience.



Next Steps

Watford Cultural Strategy 2018-2025



Next Steps

The Cultural Leaders Group has identified the following focus areas as priorities to progress in the short term:

- Attract Pollinators: Cultural Narrative & Communications
- Sowing Cultural Seeds: Creative Workspaces
- Physical Watford: Wayfinding & Greening, Softening & Animating

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About Dallas-Pierce-Quintero

We're passionate about using art and design to enrich people's lives. We enliven public spaces, craft beautiful architecture, create meaningful public art and envisage cultural strategies for places experiencing change.

Our experience in delivering art and architecture projects gives us a unique advantage in working with local government, developers and cultural organisations to develop cultural strategies for places undergoing transformation.

We have successfully delivered cultural strategies for developments across the UK, each with their own unique challenges and aspirations.

This work is highly site-specific; exploring places, spaces and engaging the people that inhabit them through on-going dialogue to highlight existing cultural assets and define a foundation from which to build a vision for the future.

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