



---

**Watford Borough Council**

Town Hall • Watford • Hertfordshire • WD17 3EX

Tel 01923 226400 Fax 01923 278100

DX 51529 Watford 2

Website [www.watford.gov.uk](http://www.watford.gov.uk) Email [enquiries@watford.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@watford.gov.uk)

---

**Enquiries to:** Kathryn Robson**Phone:** 01923 278077**Our reference:****Your reference:****Date:** 17 January 2013**Email:** [kathryn.robson@watford.gov.uk](mailto:kathryn.robson@watford.gov.uk)

Dear Karen

**Farm Terrace Allotments - Watford**

As you are aware officers from the council have been trying to contact you following Cabinet's decision in December to seek the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government approval to incorporate Farm Terrace allotments into the Watford Health Campus scheme.

We are now working on our application to the Secretary of State. We have been informed by our Farm Terrace allotment holders that you have indicated you will not be supporting our application. If this is the case, firstly it is obviously disappointing for us, particularly as we have not had the opportunity to discuss either the Health Campus proposals with you in detail or our plans to work with the allotment holders on their future options, should our application be successful. Secondly, we would appreciate it if you could provide us with your written reasons for consideration.

I am sure you can appreciate that the decision on Farm Terrace was not an easy one for our Cabinet to make. However, the benefits afforded to the Watford Health Campus scheme of including the allotments, particularly the strong arguments put forward by West Hertfordshire Hospitals NHS Trust (WHHT) for their need for additional space for a re-provided hospital, are such that they had to take what was a very difficult decision.

We thought it would be helpful, at this stage, to contact you and clarify our position regarding our application and plans for allotments in Watford.

Indeed, there are a number of areas where we would hope that, as we are members of the National Society for Allotment and Leisure Gardeners (NSALG), the Society would be able to provide advice and guidance. In particular, we would like your views on relocation and the compensation package we will offer, if the Secretary of State gives his approval.

We would, therefore, very much appreciate a response to the issues outlined in this letter and would also welcome a meeting with you to discuss them further.

Whilst you may be familiar with the reasons why the recommendation was made to include the allotments in the Health Campus, I will take this opportunity to provide a break down as to the reasons behind the recommendation. Primarily, the council could not ignore the need to secure, as far as possible, the best opportunity for WHHT to re-provide first class hospital facilities and services on the Campus site. WHHT has been absolutely clear that their preferred expansion option for the hospital, both in terms of quality and value for money, is to utilise part of the allotment site. Watford and the 500,000 people in south west Hertfordshire served by Watford

General Hospital desperately need a modern, 21<sup>st</sup> century hospital and the inclusion of Farm Terrace means this is definitely a more likely outcome.

However, the hospital is not the only compelling reason why Farm Terrace has been included in the Health Campus:

- financial viability is a critical issue for the scheme. The Campus is a very complex site, with a large number of costs that have to be met in order to bring about the benefits and deliver the much needed regeneration that the area needs. For example, there is an estimated £40 million worth of 'abnormals' associated with the site – such as the current contaminated land, the flood risk, sewer relocations and demolition, where needed. In addition there are infrastructure costs that have to be met, such as for the 1km of new road that is needed to improve access to the hospital. To be frank, housing is one of the main ways that money can be generated to meet these costs. Overall, the scheme is not projected to make significant profits but we do need to do what we can to deliver the scheme and reduce the financial risk for the public sector partners
- new and affordable homes. As outlined in our Core Strategy, it is important the council provides an adequate and continuous supply of land for housing to meet Watford's housing growth requirement in sustainable locations. It is also important that the council provides a range of housing types and sizes, including affordable housing to meet the needs of all sectors of our community. Indeed, any new homes on the allotment land will be much needed family homes – which, without the use of allotment space, would not be well provided on the site. This is because of the issues associated with the flood plain. The council is looking to achieve 35% affordable housing on the site overall, a percentage that would have to be reconsidered without the allotments due to the financial viability issues. Less affordable housing would negatively impact on the council's ability to meet its statutory homeless obligations.

The Health Campus partnership genuinely believes that the benefits of the scheme will be experienced and enjoyed by all residents of West Watford and that it will create a really appealing new community with attractive homes, accessible green open spaces, new employment opportunities, fantastic transport links and other new facilities and amenities. Overall, the Health Campus will bring much-needed social, economic and environmental value to our town. If this were not the case, the council would not be a committed partner.

We are not insensitive to the impact of the Cabinet decision on our Farm Terrace allotment holders and fully understand their current distress and frustration. As a council we are committed to working with them on their future options. This involves:

- providing new allotment plots at two sites within the borough (Paddock Road and Holywell) – this will replace the allotment plots on Farm Terrace so that the amount of overall provision within Watford is maintained or indeed slightly increased
- re-locating Farm Terrace allotment holders to a new site of their choice, as far as possible, and moving structures, plants or anything else they identify as important to them where practical
- developing a consistent and fair compensation package
- providing a community garden opportunity on the Health Campus site – we are very excited about this initiative as it emerged as a suggestion through our engagement process with the allotment holders. It will offer an area for local people – both those who currently live in the area and the new residents - to grow produce and enjoy the benefits of gardening as well as fostering a real sense of community.

We would genuinely like to consult with you on all the points outlined above.

We are inviting all Farm Terrace allotment holders to a drop-in session to engage with us on their individual future options and needs in light of the provision we are making. Our aim is to deal with everyone's individual concerns fairly.

Finally, we want to re-confirm the extent of the allotment investment programme that will upgrade allotments in Watford. The outline programme has been estimated at around £800k and will include things like new fencing, toilets, compost bins; vacant plot clearance and access improvements. We will work with each allotment site to develop a programme of improvements specific to the requirements of the tenants and the site. This investment will be dependent on the capital funding being identified.

We look forward to receiving your comments on the issues raised in this letter and to arranging an opportunity to discuss Farm Terrace with you face-to-face in advance of our submission to the Secretary of State. We thought it might be helpful to suggest some dates and times for a meeting:

- **Monday 21 January – from 2pm**
- **Thursday 24 January – from 9am (all day)**
- **Friday 25 January – from 9am (all day)**
- **Wednesday 30 January – from 2pm**

In the meantime, please contact Paul Rabbitts (01923 278250) or Kathryn Robson (01923 278077) if you have any questions. Either Paul or Kathryn can confirm meeting arrangements.

Yours sincerely



Lesley Palumbo  
Head of Community Service

Encs – current proposals for Watford Health Campus