

Allotment Questions – following Allotment Meeting – 17 July 2012

Questions that contained information that could identify individuals or other allotment holders have been edited so that the overall meaning of the question is intact but people's privacy has been maintained. Some responses are the same as similar questions were asked. Additional questions have been submitted since this original set. These are currently being responded to.

Ref	Question	Response
1	I have lived in Watford for over 20 years and there is only a small part that floods. How does this affect the allotments?	<p>The River Colne runs through the Health Campus scheme and so we have to consider that there might be flooding. It is one of the areas you have to explore when you are proposing developing a site which has a river running through it. This does not mean that the site floods regularly but it does mean we have to take this into account when looking at what can be situated in what is known as 'the flood plain' i.e. the area close to the river that might be subject to flooding in an extremely wet year.</p> <p>This impacts on the viability of the Watford Health Campus site as a lot of the site is in the flood plain – which restricts what can be built on there. The allotments are out of the flood plain, hence one of the reasons the Health Campus partnership has made the request to the council.</p>
2	If Farm Terrace is used by the hospital are you going to provide us with an allotment within walking distance of our homes. We walk down in the evenings to water and do some work on our allotments,	As was discussed at the Allotment Meeting on 17 July 2012, the council wants to work with allotment holders on the re-provision of allotments, should this be necessary. At this stage the council is in the early stages of considering potential alternatives but this is something we would want to work on with the Farm Terrace Group, in particular. The first meeting of the Farm Terrace Group is at the end of August and will run until October.
3	Why build new offices when you cannot fill other offices in Clarendon Road (for example)	<p>Since 2001, Watford's economic heyday, the town now provides approximately 14,000 less jobs. Evidence also shows that large business relocations are few and far between and Watford now generally attracts smaller businesses who need flexibility in their offices, to allow them to respond to different needs as they grow. Many of the vacant office buildings in the town are designed to cater for single, large occupiers.</p> <p>This means that much of the vacant stock in the town is unlikely to be occupied without significant investment – the vast majority of this vacant stock is also owned by large pension funds and hedge companies who hold the stock but are not prepared to invest or redevelop these sites. The council is, therefore, not in a position to influence its redevelopment and there is little appetite in the private sector to spend speculatively until there is a wider improvement in the market.</p>

Ref	Question	Response
		<p>Watford Health Campus, therefore, provides a somewhat unique opportunity to create business space more suited to the needs of modern Watford businesses – helping existing businesses stay in the town as they grow and helping attract new businesses and new jobs to Watford.</p> <p>West Watford is also one of the more deprived parts of the town, generally experiencing higher levels of unemployment and lower levels of car ownership. It is, therefore, important that jobs are provided within easy access.</p> <p>In a regeneration scheme like Watford Health Campus, it's also important that opportunities are provided for people to work close to where they live. A mixed-use development like this seeks to create a genuinely more sustainable community for the future, providing housing, employment, services and leisure facilities all within close proximity, reducing the need for people to travel and ensuring Watford is a place where people will continue to want to live, work and play in the future.</p>
4	Please provide a list of all available potential green spaces that could get a new allotment site within 1 mile of farm terrace allotments	<p>As was discussed at the Allotment Meeting on 17 July, the council wants to work with allotment holders on the re-provision of allotments, should this be necessary.</p> <p>At this point in time, the council is in the very early stages of considering alternatives but this is something we would want to do with the Farm Terrace Group. The '1 mile' guidance for re-provisioning that you are referencing within this question, will be part of the discussions. Work will be undertaken in the next few weeks on what is possible and this will then be explored with the Farm Terrace Group. We will be providing relevant maps and information to support the meetings and the Group's work and discussions. When these are ready, we will be able to make them available.</p> <p>The first meeting of the Farm Terrace Group is at the end of August and will run until October. We have now sent out full details of the meetings to the Farm Terrace allotment holders who have expressed an interest in being part of the Group.</p>
5	Is it the councils long term plan to build houses on the Wiggshall site as part of the Health Campus / or for extra housing	<p>Our response is that the council is not planning to develop the Wiggshall site as part of the Health Campus scheme. The Health Campus site is clearly defined and this does not include the Wiggshall site.</p>

Ref	Question	Response
6i	Why office space on the new Campus, when we have been advised that there are many empty office sites in Watford – Clarendon Road.	<p>Since 2001, Watford's economic heyday, the town now provides approximately 14,000 less jobs.</p> <p>Evidence also shows that large business relocations are few and far between and Watford now generally attracts smaller businesses who need flexibility in their offices, to allow them to respond to different needs as they grow. Many of the vacant office buildings in the town are designed to cater for single large occupiers.</p> <p>This means that much of the vacant stock in the town is unlikely to be occupied without significant investment – the vast majority of this vacant stock is also owned by large pension funds and hedge companies who hold the stock but are not prepared to invest or redevelop these sites. The council is therefore not in a position to influence its redevelopment and there is little appetite in the private sector to spend speculatively until there is a wider improvement in the market.</p> <p>Watford Health Campus, therefore, provides a somewhat unique opportunity to create business space more suited to the needs of modern Watford businesses – helping existing businesses stay in the town as they grow and helping attract new businesses and new jobs to Watford.</p> <p>West Watford is also one of the more deprived parts of the town, generally experiencing higher levels of unemployment and lower levels of car ownership. It's therefore important that jobs are provided within easy access.</p> <p>In a regeneration scheme like Watford Health Campus, it's also important that opportunities are provided for people to work close to where they live. A mixed-use development like this seeks to create a genuinely more sustainable community for the future, providing housing, employment, services and leisure facilities all within close proximity, reducing the need for people to travel and ensuring Watford is a place where people will continue to want to live, work and play in the future</p>
6ii	If no school spaces why build new houses on the scale proposed. Has other infra structure been taken into account.	<p>We are currently working with Hertfordshire County Council to provide new school places to serve the needs of Watford's existing population. We have also taken account of the need for school places that will arise as a result of the new homes that are to be provided as part of the Health Campus scheme and other major projects within Watford. This all forms part of the Infrastructure Delivery Plan that is part of the evidence base for the Council's Core Strategy (Local Plan). This available at http://www.watford.gov.uk/ccm/content/planning-and-development/core-strategy/core-strategy-library-of-documents/infrastructure-delivery.en</p>

Ref	Question	Response
7	Are there any plans to develop on other allotment sites, rumour that a road is to take some of the allotments at Garston Manor	Our Planning department has replied that this rumour is news to us and there are no plans for a road to go through Garston Manor allotments
8	What contact / liaison / advice have the developers / council had with Herts Gardens Trust and National Garden History who would both oppose acquisition / loss of the site	The Hertfordshire Garden Trust and Garden History Society are concerned with historic parks, gardens and landscapes. They would not, therefore, be consulted on plans to develop the Health Campus site as no such heritage assets are affected. If a decision is taken to develop in the allotments the National Society of Allotment and Leisure Gardeners would have to be consulted as part of the statutory process of applying for deregulation
9	If you shut down Farm Terrace can we have the fencing	Issues such as this one would be discussed by the Allotment Stakeholder Panel.
10	<p>The allotment next to us has been totally neglected for 2 year and is a riot of weeds. I have written to you about this before but had no reply. We have offered to take it over but it cannot be let. Our allotment is small and we would ideally like a larger plot but I would like to know why nothing has been done about the situation. The tenant of is a very elderly and very frail old lady.</p> <p>Why has it been allowed to stay neglected and why was my letter ignored?</p>	<p>We are very sorry you did not receive a response to your original communication.</p> <p>We are aware of the situation and are currently taking steps to resolve what appears to be non-cultivation. At this stage this involves contacting the current tenant to explain that the plot is not being maintained to an acceptable standard and that we would expect to end their tenancy.</p> <p>There is currently a waiting list for your allotment and so any vacant plots will be offered in accordance with this list.</p> <p>We hope this helps reassure you that we are aware of the situation and are taking action.</p>
11i	You have spoken about good access for the new site. This will not be the case on Match days. Has the possibility of relocating the football stadium been examined maybe to the Ascot Road site (proposed Morrisons site).	The access road which was mentioned during the meeting will significantly improve traffic visiting the hospital on every day of the week. If you take into account the number of staff, patients and visitors who currently drive to the hospital any new access road can only help alleviate congestion problems. Watford Football Club is in private ownership and so there is no scope to move the Club.
11ii	Also failing this, roof style allotments do exist. Although not ideal has this been considered on top of the new health complex.	This could be taken up with the private sector partner during the consultation phase on the scheme.

Ref	Question	Response
12i	I would like to know how allotments will be advertised to ensure that all those that are empty can be taken (by appropriate demographic for the area as per survey – is Watford 95% white British)	Some of our allotment sites have vacant plots but a few also have waiting lists. In terms of encouraging all the community to participate in allotments then this needs to be considered to see if we can better understand the lower take up by some groups. This is already in the Action Plan in the draft allotments strategy.
12ii	Is the school / Callowland plan at proposal or decision made stage? How will plot holders get to hear about this (I am next to the Callowland so really want to know what/when/how)	The council has had an approach from Orchard School regarding the potential to use some of the fallow allotment land for an expansion. The Council has regular meetings with Hertfordshire County Council to discuss the provision of school places in Watford. The potential to permanently expand Orchard by using some of the allotments is being considered as part of these discussions. There are no firm proposals and no decisions have been made. At such time as there is a firm proposal there would be full engagement with allotment holders and other stakeholders.
13	I will email but wanted to say how poorly managed and led this meeting was this evening. Three questions at a time was time wasting and confusing. Too many wide rambling issues were covered from individual gripes to a 'Health' Campus which is actually a housing development! I thought I was here to support Farm Terrace allotment holders who were almost lost amongst the rhetoric of the panel. The council should be ashamed of itself. It has made me feel like moving out of Watford and not continuing to live in a place where the residents are 'steam rolled' and whose views are fundamentally ignored as the decisions are already made. I noted mention of the Croxley Rail Link as happening soon BUT it is currently under discussion and there is a public enquiry. Is this another decision which has already been made. I will email more coherent objectives but wanted to make my feelings known.	<p>We are sorry you found the meeting on 17 July 2012 unhelpful. It is always difficult when there are over 150 people at a meeting to ensure that everyone's issues are covered and that everyone can ask a question. Although you were aware of the issues relating to Farm Terrace, we knew that there were a number of other issues that people would want to raise and felt it was important to give people this opportunity rather than be prescriptive as to what people could or could not ask. A number of people have taken up the opportunity to contact us after the meeting with questions / comments and so we do hope that everyone feels they have had the chance to raise what is of importance to them. You might also be interested to know that we re-issued the invitation to all Farm Terrace allotment holders to join the Farm Terrace Group, which is meeting over the autumn and will be an effective way for them to raise issues and concerns.</p> <p>We are equally sorry that you believe people's views are not listened to in Watford. We know how much time and effort the council and other organisations put into engaging with the community and take feedback received very seriously.</p> <p>During the evening, we did try and explain that Watford Borough Council cannot simply say 'no' to development and new housing. All local authorities across the country are required to provide new homes and we are trying to do this in a planned and consistent way. This means, where possible, we are using previously developed sites to avoid issues such as back garden developments and infilling, which are very unpopular with the community. This also enables us to make sure that new developments are provided with the infrastructure that they need. It does seem to surprise people that the council cannot turn away new development. National policies, including the National Planning Policy Framework, have at their heart 'presumption in favour of sustainable development'. This includes requiring councils to make provision for new housing and</p>

Ref	Question	Response
		<p>other development within their areas.</p> <p>You might have seen Jan Filochowski's (Chief Executive, West Hertfordshire Hospitals NHS Trust) letter in the Watford Observer on 27 July 2012, which explained why the Hospital do believe this scheme is a 'Health' Campus and why it is so important to the Hospital. A copy is available on the council website.</p> <p>The Croxley Rail Link (CRL) is not a done deal. A Public Inquiry to consider the Transport and Works Act Order application is scheduled for October. Those that see the CRL as a positive development for Watford are optimistic that it will progress. There were a number of transport schemes that were considered by government for funding and so the fact that it has been taken forward to the public inquiry stage is positive but this does not mean that arguments for and against won't be aired. Watford Borough Council is not involved with the public inquiry as we are not one of the main partners in the scheme – details of which are available at: http://www.croxleyrailink.com/public-inquiry.aspx</p>
14	Is the Briar Road site the only site when allotments have been halved in length?	<p>No, we have looked at reducing the size of plots on a number of our sites to allow us to reduce waiting lists, which we have achieved across the borough. Also because a 10 pole plot for many is simply too large, it gives us the option of broadening the appeal to potential tenants.</p>
15	How can it be the case that the developments will be viable due to retail, when shops cannot survive in the centre of Watford to the full capacity of the Harlequin and due to housing when the key worker flats at the hospital site are not fully occupied?	<p>There is demand for retail on the Health Campus site to cater for west Watford, the hospital and new residents.</p> <p>Developers and housing associations have indicated they wish to purchase housing sites.</p> <p>We have made enquiries about the key worker flats and there are currently two properties being advertised for intermediate rent, which is not a high proportion of vacancies for a scheme of that size. There are none being advertised for outright sale currently.</p>

Ref	Question	Response
16	<p>Why is retail space needed on a 'Health Campus? Unless for retail therapy surely we have enough empty retail units on Watford High Street? 600 + affordable homes will bring many social issues – as we have already seen and are experiencing with the Football Club's wrap around flats.</p>	<p>There is demand for retail on the Health Campus site to cater for west Watford, the hospital and new residents.</p> <p>The proposal is not for 600 affordable homes. The council looks to achieve around 35% of affordable housing in any sizeable scheme.</p> <p>We have checked with our reports and records and there are no complaints relating to the wrap around flats, which have provided key worker housing that was much needed in Watford. If you have any examples, we are happy to forward them to the relevant service area.</p>
17	<p>Please advise how many times the communal pathways at Farm Terrace allotments have been cut / strimmed in 2012. I have two children who visit the allotment and I am worried that may have an accident in the near future if these pathways are not maintained.</p>	<p>You asked how many times the communal pathways at Farm Terrace allotments have been cut / strimmed in 2012.</p> <p>All communal pathways are strimmed once a year and generally done in July / August. As many of the paths at Farm Terrace are concrete, they do not generally cause problems. Our records show the paths have not yet been strimmed this year (as of 6 August 2012).</p>
18	<p>My childhood memories from the age of 4 of going to our allotment at Farm Terrace and helping my mum grow her vegetables. Now at the age of 19 , I still do the same. It is good exercise and therapeutic and without these allotments for future generations it will decrease motivation to be active and green fingered, therefore, creating health problems.</p> <p>I myself have undergone server surgery at Watford General and was provided with blankets with holes in and a changing room with no curtains. Maintain and improve the buildings you already have. The allotments are a small space in an already existing concrete jungle. Also as a student nowhere can provide affordable housing that's a fact that you will not be able to solve without the country's economy.</p>	<p>We appreciate that many Farm Terrace allotment holders have fond memories of the site and of working on their allotments. We also know that open spaces make an important contribution to people's quality of life and to being able to enjoy a healthy lifestyle. That is why green and open space that is available for local people and visitors to the hospital to enjoy is a fundamental part of the Health Campus scheme. We hope this will open up health opportunities for even more people in west Watford.</p> <p>Affordable housing is a relative term and we fully understand that even the lowest cost housing in Watford might be beyond what some people can afford. However, without ensuring that some less expensive housing is available even more people would be priced out of Watford. Our aim is to do what we can to provide a range of housing across the borough so that Watford remains the diverse and vibrant town it has always been.</p> <p>In terms of the Hospital, if you have managed to read Jan Filochowski's (Chief Executive, West Hertfordshire Hospitals NHS Trust) letter in the Watford Observer on 27 July 2012, you will see why the Hospital believe this scheme is so important to the future of the Hospital and to Watford. The letter is available on the council website - http://www.watford.gov.uk/ccm/content/strategic-services/watford-health-campus/watford-health-campus.en?page=3</p>

Ref	Question	Response
19i	Are Willow Lane houses being affected with this development?	Willow Lane houses are not being directly affected by this development. There will be the normal issues that are associated with any development but these will be managed so that impact on local residents is kept to a minimum.
19ii	Will consideration be given if relocated to how near we live, where will be relocated to.	These types of issues will be discussed by the Farm Terrace Group.
19iii	Rickmansworth are currently selling allotments as freeholds. Do you or are you considering this.	This is not currently something the council is considering and is unlikely to do so.
20	A big part of your presentation for the Health Campus is that taking the allotment space is to free up space needed for the regeneration of the hospital. Why then is it that in all of the plans the site is being used for housing. It seems to me that the space is not actually necessary to the plans for the hospital but purely for the council's 'Campus' plans outside of the hospital. Your main argument is flawed here. It not vital to the improvement of the hospital itself so why are you selling it as such?	<p>There are no set plans for the allotment site. The 'base case' was no development on the allotments. If the allotments were brought into the site, however, it would benefit the Health Campus scheme overall, including the hospital. Firstly, it would allow consideration for part of the hospital to be built on the site and it would also allow flexibility in terms of delivery.</p> <p>If you have managed to read Jan Filochowski's (Chief Executive, West Hertfordshire Hospitals NHS Trust) letter in the Watford Observer on 27 July 2012, you will see why the Hospital believe this scheme is so important to the future of the Hospital and to Watford. The letter is available on the council website.</p>
21	The Health Campus is important to Hertfordshire but at what cost? My allotment is a huge reason why I stay living in Aynho Street. It gives me exercise, friendship and a sense of community. Many generations have fought to preserve this site in the past and I am proud to represent the current allotment holders to preserve what should be viewed as a 'right' for Watford residents to continue 'growing my own' for the next 150 years.	<p>We do appreciate the concerns that Farm Terrace allotment holders have about the possibility of losing this local amenity. We have now sent out invitations to the Farm Terrace Group meetings to those who expressed an interest. We are looking forward to working with the Group on the future of the site and on resolving and finding solutions to issues, such as yours above, that have been raised.</p> <p>We also know that open spaces are a really important contributor to people's quality of life and being able to enjoy a healthy lifestyle. That is why green and open space that is available for all local people, as well as visitors to the hospital, is a fundamental part of the Health Campus scheme. We hope that the improved access to public green space that is part of the proposals for the site will open up health opportunities for even more people in west Watford to enjoy.</p>

Ref	Question	Response
22i	In respect of Callowland allotments can you please supply me with a plan showing the extent of allotment land showing roads, schools etc	We are looking into your request for a map of the Callowland allotment site. It should be something we can provide but we are currently upgrading our electronic system where all the relevant information is stored and cannot access it until next week. I will advise you as soon as I know.
22ii	In respect of the various presentations can these be provided to all those present in the form of a printed handout	<p>These are now available on the Watford Borough Council website: http://www.watford.gov.uk/ccm/content/strategic-services/watford-health-campus/watford-health-campus.en#internalSection1</p> <p>If you need a hard copy these can be printed out but this would be very costly for everyone who attended the meeting. Many people prefer to access information electronically and hate to see paper wasted.</p>
23	The development has already taken Willow Lane allotments and some land from Farm Terrace allotments, if more land is required why not use this as an opportunity to relocate the Football Club and use this land instead. Its well drained, flat and already has utilities available. This would reduce traffic congestion, pollutions and noise.	Watford Football Club is in private ownership and so there is no scope to move the Club
24	Will new link roads improve the traffic congestion in Wighenhall Road and high levels of pollutions.	<p>The new road is expected to make a significant contribution to alleviating traffic problems in west Watford. A large number of vehicles currently on the roads around the Health Campus site are associated with the Hospital – staff, patients, visitors and deliveries. We would expect many of these people to take advantage of the improved public transport that will be available to the site as well as the new access route offered by the road.</p> <p>Queuing traffic is a major contributing factor to poor air quality. Watford Borough Council actively monitors air quality across the borough and is aware of where this can be an issue, which does include The Hornets end of Wighenhall Road. The assessments that have previously been undertaken on the impact of the new road show that it should improve air quality in the area because it will reduce the number of cars queuing on Wighenhall Road during busy periods.</p>

Ref	Question	Response
25i	As I predicted the venue was too small for the number of people invited. Presumably some would-be attenders were turned away.	The venue was actually not too small in terms of the capacity it is allowed to accommodate safely. A number of people turned up on the night as we had expected without registering in advance and so we kept some spaces back for them. A few people booked after the closing date and all but a few (less than 5) were able to attend. It was frustrating that some people who did book spaces then chose not to turn up. We could not anticipate in advance how many this would be and so had to keep to the number allowed.
25ii	The agenda was entirely taken up with Farm Terrace problems. Will there be another meeting to discuss problems of the wider allotment community?	Interestingly, a number of questions on the night and ones we are now responding to were not about Farm Terrace so there was scope for people to raise issues of concern to them. We have had a good number of volunteers for the Allotment Stakeholder Panel so people will be able to raise concerns through this route going forward as we hope to have a representative from each allotment on the Panel. A letter to every allotment holder updating them on the meeting and what happens next has been sent today.
25iii	Lesley Palumbo promised a letter to all Watford plot holders. I hope that this will happen.	This letter was sent on 14 August 2012.
25iv	An allotment holder asked a question early in the meeting which invited the panel to admit that the private developers under consideration, will not be building a new hospital. His question was never answered and his point was never conceded although I know it was true.	The phased nature of the new hospital means that at this stage the Health Campus partnership can only identify certain elements of the scheme for development. We anticipate that the joint venture Watford Borough Council is forming with the private sector will deliver parts of the new hospital.
25v	An allotment holder asked if Farm Terrace was designated as housing land. This was never answered.	Farm Terrace has not been designated as housing land. The message from the evening is that the two potential private sector partners are looking at how best to make the site work in terms of what is financially viable but also what helps deliver the aspirations of the partnership in terms of a quality, sustainable community in west Watford. At the same time the site needs to retain a degree of flexibility so that it can accommodate West Hertfordshire Hospitals NHS Trust's ambitions for a re-provisioned hospital.
25vi	We never learned what the Willow Lane allotment land is to be used for now that the hospital is to be rebuilt on its existing site.	This land is part of the overall Campus site and so, like all the other areas, is currently part of the proposals being developed by the potential private sector partners. We do not yet know for certain where the hospital will be rebuilt. All the elements form part of the Health Campus 'jigsaw' that we want to ensure delivers the very best for Watford.

Ref	Question	Response
25vii	Tom Dobrashian tried to make a case for the private developers needing Farm Terrace, but his main point was that rents have declined in these harsh economic times (effectively admitting that the value of letting office space, was a determining factor. See 4. above). Tom claimed that no one wants to see the Watford scheme 'stalled' like so many other schemes today - not true! A stalled scheme would seem a very desirable result at present.	We firmly believe that the Health Campus is of benefit to Watford and to west Watford in particular. And a re-provisioned hospital (that is dependent on the wider scheme) is something that local people fought very hard to keep not so long ago. Obviously, everyone is entitled to their own opinion on whether it is good that the scheme is now progressing.
25viii	Kyle McClelland spoke of the need for a large hospital in Watford. Some of us think that Hemel Hempstead deserves a good hospital as well. Kyle failed to admit that the private developers were not being contracted to build a hospital. (See 4. above)	Waiting on a response from West Hertfordshire Hospitals NHS Trust.
25ix	Paul Rabbitts was invited to reiterate his much trumpeted survey. I am unhappy about the dates quoted for this survey - Paul says 'Last year', but it feels much longer ago than this. Only plotholders in possession of an existing Council plot were ever invited to take part. People on the waiting list for an allotment were certainly never sent a survey form. Why does Paul Rabbitts keep insisting that Cherry Tree allotments are self managed when no lease for this site has been agreed between the Council and the plot holders?	The survey was carried out in 2011 and the results were comprehensive, with a 42% response. This is a significantly high response for such a survey. Sending the form to those on waiting lists would achieve little as the questions were aimed primarily at those who already have a plot. Cherry Tree, in essence, is self managed as they set and collect their own rents, carry out all admin. duties and are responsible for all issues on their site. The lease has unfortunately taken longer to resolve but is almost at the stage where it can be signed off.
25x	Manny Lewis spoke of the need for school expansion without managing to mention that a primary school in Meriden was very recently closed to allow more housing to be built. The Orchard school is looking to expand onto a piece of Allotment land. Why is this school not invited to expand onto the vacant Gammons Farm Close land which adjoins the school property?	The Council has regular meetings with Hertfordshire County Council to discuss the provision of school places in Watford. The potential to permanently expand Orchard by using some of the allotments is being considered as part of these discussions. There are no firm proposals and no decisions have been made. At such time as there is a firm proposal there would be full engagement with allotment holders and other stakeholders.

Ref	Question	Response
25xi	Various pictures appeared at the meeting which have never appeared on the 'Health Campus' web site. Could we have all these pictures available to be viewed?	Although the private sector bidders were in agreement for the pictures to be part of the evening, they would not want them posted on a website at this stage of the bidding process as there are issues around commercial sensitivity
25xii	The general impression left by the meeting was that the economic interests of the developers are driving this whole interest in taking over Farm Terrace.	During the evening the Health Campus partnership was at pains to point out that the quality of the final scheme (how it creates a good quality sustainable community for west Watford, including allowing for a re-provisioned hospital) is a major factor in how proposals from the private sector partner are evaluated.
26i	Some of the uncultivated plot problems may be due to lack of knowledge. I am aware of one who has received a warning letter who works her plot alone and never gets on top of the weeds. Her neighbouring plot holder has advised her on winter digging to get on top of the weeds, something she now intends doing but never thought of previously.	This might be an area that the Allotment Stakeholder Panel considers in terms of how allotment holders can better share knowledge and experience.
26ii	Over the last 6 months numerous plot holders have complained about the number of signs on Wiggenhall and the injuries caused. Rounding the corners is not the solution. The large plates need to go, we only need the vertical posts with the numbers down the posts as was the case with the previous wooden stakes. When is effective action being taken to avoid further injury. Apart from the serious cuts they are a trip hazard, something I am sure WBC avoids in your workplace.	The officer responsible for Wiggenhall visited the site and spoke to a number of tenants who indicated that the signs were not a problem as they were big enough to see but did agree that rounding off of the signs would be an appropriate solution. This has since been carried out. The style of signage was agreed as part of the works with tenants. The council's health and safety officer has seen them and does not consider that they are a hazard.
26iii	The vacant plots on Wiggenhall are inadequately covered, something we were told is on the "to do list" months ago. When will that be addressed? We are paying premium rents and expect a reasonable level of service.	Black plastic has been put down with stakes but there have been problems with this. An alternative method will be looked at in September.
26iv	When will the Wiggenhall compost bins and rubbish area be cleared?	Compost bins do not require emptying. The rubbish area is a manure collection area but is being used to dump rubbish by tenants. It will be cleared to allow a delivery of manure in autumn

Ref	Question	Response
26v	We noted that one Farm Terrace plot holder who left comment on the board at the 17 July meeting lives in Woodwaye. Wiggshall is much closer to Woodwaye than Farm Terrace. If Farm Terrace goes will part of the placement strategy be to fill vacant plots on Wiggshall?	If relocation is required, all plot holders will be given options to relocate to any plot where there are currently vacancies as well as have a choice once relocated sites have been agreed.
26vi	What is being done to publicise allotments? E.g. A notice board at the Wiggshall gates advertising vacant plots.	Noticeboards are planned at all allotment sites as part of improvements across all sites. The Allotment Stakeholder Panel will discuss the marketing and publicity for allotments
27i	I asked a question within the meeting as to why the Council felt it wanted or needed an additional 600 family homes in what we'd just been informed is now the most densely populated District Council in the UK. Mayor Thornhill's response gave no justification for the need, focussing instead on a repeated statement "we can't say 'no' to developers". She made it quite plain that she interpreted "a presumption in favour of development" to mean "we have no option but to permit it". This is the message she later repeated to the meeting, as though stepping back from any responsibility to make decisions for herself - or rather, for the people of Watford. Given her statement "we cannot say 'no' to developers", how does she reconcile that with the news she delivered via her own newsletter in the same week that the Council has turned down developments elsewhere, including winning an appeal against overdevelopment in Church Road, Nascot Wood? She cannot have it both ways. Will she accept that either she has (very) short-term memory loss, or that instead she was deliberately misleading - indeed lying to - the Allotments meeting?	<p>As part of the planning process the Council is required to identify an adequate and continuous supply of land for housing to meet Watford's housing growth requirements. All local authorities have to do this.</p> <p>In order to achieve this the Council has a housing target of 6,500 homes to be delivered from 2006 to 2031. This target is based on ONS population projections, previous East of England Plan targets and potential housing development land identified in the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment. The target is not sufficient to accommodate all of the demand or need for new housing in Watford, but it is considered to be a reasonable figure taking account of the sites available within the constrained administrative boundary and our infrastructure requirements.</p> <p>The overall strategy is to provide most of the new housing at sustainable locations, identified as Special Policy Areas (SPA) in the Council's Local Plan (Core Strategy). The SPA 's are previously developed land, close to neighbourhood centres and with good transport links.</p> <p>The Health Campus is one of these sites (SPA3). This envisages provision of at least 500 new homes, 1,000 to 1,900 new jobs and additional supporting facilities/infrastructure at the Health Campus, in line with the current outline planning permission. For more information please refer to Policy SPA3 and Chapter 8 of the Core Strategy: http://www.watford.gov.uk/ccm/content/planning-and-development/core-strategy/core-strategy-dpd-examination-in-public.en</p> <p>The Council can say no to developers. However, in accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework (which is set by government) there is a presumption in</p>

Ref	Question	Response
27ii	<p>The meeting heard that an issue on allotments throughout Watford was uncultivated plots, and that (albeit with some dispute over occupancy rates) there are unallocated plots at most - if not all - allotment sites. Many unused allotments have been allowed by the Council to deteriorate to such an extent that they are effectively un-lettable. An issue not raised at the meeting was that these untended allotments contribute very substantially to the spread of weeds to adjoining plots, making everyone's cultivation of their plots much harder. In that environment, can you explain to me why I was effectively evicted from one of my two plots last year for alleged non-cultivation? I proved conclusively to the officer concerned that my plot was at least 85% cultivated - substantially exceeding the Council's 75% requirement - yet he chose to ignore the facts and claimed the plot was under cultivated. He micro-managed the planting of one area with seedlings that</p>	<p>favour of sustainable development and all Council's are required to identify sites or broad locations for growth.</p> <p>Although it may seem unpalatable, as a responsible local authority the Council is required to identify the best locations for new housing / employment growth to go. The creation of a new sustainable community at the Health Campus SPA is one such location.</p> <p>The Core Strategy has been subject to extensive public consultation and is now nearing adoption. A final consultation will commence shortly.</p> <p>We are unable to comment on the detail of the issue you raise as we would require more information . Perhaps you would like to provide more details under a separate communication and we can look into this further. Non cultivated plots are a real issue and we continue to pursue this. At times we are also criticised for been too onerous as well as not strict enough. Getting that balance right is important and we won't be able to satisfy all. However, we remain committed to driving down waiting lists and being consistent on the issue of non cultivated plots. This is something we can discuss further with the Allotments Stakeholder Panel when it meets in the autumn.</p> <p>We are unable to comment on the detail of the issue you raise as we would require more information . Perhaps you would like to provide more details under a separate communication and we can look into this further. Non cultivated plots are a real issue and we continue to pursue this. At times we are also criticised for been too onerous as well as not strict enough. Getting that balance right is important and we won't be able to satisfy all. However, we remain committed to driving down waiting lists and being consistent on the issue of non cultivated plots. This is something we can discuss further with the Allotments Stakeholder Panel when it meets in the autumn.</p>

Ref	Question	Response
	<p>had not been hardened off and consequently failed to produce any crop whatsoever. With an attitude like that it was not possible for me to continue working the plot and I reluctantly gave it up after over 15 years' tenancy. Despite the officer's protestation that there were people on the waiting list eager to take up allotment gardening, the plot has remained unlet and is now a source of weeds for all the neighbours. Can the Council explain to me who is benefited by forcing a tenant off an 85% cultivated plot with the result that the plot is now completely unused</p>	
27iii	<p>At the meeting the Mayor enthused about "profits" from the Health Campus development being returned to the Council. However previously we had heard that income was to be split between the Health authority, the primary developer and the Council. Is it not true, then, that only a <i>proportion</i> of any profit would be returned to the Council, with a proportion being retained by the private construction company? I suspect many will have assumed that any split in income would be an equal three-way split; can you confirm that this is the case or, if not, what the proportions would in fact be?</p>	<p>The premise of the joint venture proposed is that profit will be split 50:50 between the private sector and public sector.</p>
27iv	<p>All developments are required to make a "Section 106" contribution to Council funds. Can you confirm that the developer of the Health Campus site would be required to make these contributions, and can you provide me with a summary breakdown of how Section 106 money has actually been used in recent years, and what proportion of the income from these payments has actually been spent on the projects which Section 106 funding is reserved for?</p>	<p>The Health Campus site would be expected to make Section 106 contributions.</p> <p>Not all Section 106 money comes to Watford BC as Hertfordshire County Council is responsible for many of the areas the money is used to support such as roads and schools. The council did an update on Section 106 spending last September and this can be found at: http://watford.moderngov.co.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=121&MId=781&Ver=4</p> <p>S.106 money is ring fenced to the provision of new infrastructure e.g. provision or enhancement of open space, education, sustainable transport. It cannot be spent on other things</p>

Ref	Question	Response
27v	<p>The presenters made repeated references to the Croxley Rail Link (CRL), treating it as though it were a <i>fait accompli</i>. Does the Council, however, accept that at this stage the CRL is simply through to the next round of assessment and funding application; no funding is actually available to build the link and the major partners (Network Rail and Transport for London) both describe the scheme simply as "aspirational"? As such, and given the current national economic climate, the CRL is very much a "might be" and cannot be built in as a major factor in the Health Campus development.</p> <p>If the Council believes so strongly that the CRL is such a vital piece of local transport infrastructure, why then did the Council conspire with the rail operators to ensure that the service was not resumed after the "temporary" removal of the Ascot Road bridge? Until then a commuter service had used the line regularly but services were temporarily suspended when the bridge was removed to facilitate access to the Ascot Road developments, and later severed more completely by the "new" Ascot Road. The Council then contrived not to replace the bridge but to run a skeleton and useless "rail replacement service" contravening the legal requirements regarding the termination of services over a rail route. The appropriate orders were eventually obtained but by that time the line had decayed and all remaining users of the service switched to alternative transport. In the 1980s I contributed financially (as a payer of Watford Council taxes, then the "rates") to the development of a brand new station on this short branch line, at Watford Stadium. This station was used by only a handful of services before closure (again, without the formal legal procedures being followed). Rather than rely on a "maybe" plan costing local people in excess of £40M, has the Council considered a much simpler plan of reinstating the original service, terminating before the "missing" Ascot Road bridge (and therefore</p>	<p>The Croxley Rail Link is not yet definite but those that see it as a positive development for Watford are optimistic that it will progress. There were a number of transport schemes that were considered by government for funding and so the fact that it has been taken forward to the public inquiry stage is positive. This does not mean that arguments for and against won't be aired before it is given the go ahead.</p> <p>We appreciate there is a significant amount of history associated with the Croxley Rail Link. As the district council, we are not the leading local authority partner on Croxley Rail Link – this is Hertfordshire County Council – but we are keeping informed about developments and progress as we believe Croxley Rail Link is of vital importance to the future prosperity of the borough overall</p> <p>Details of the public inquiry are available at http://www.croxleyraillink.com/public-inquiry.aspx.</p>

Ref	Question	Response
	<p>serving the Ascot Road developments better than the original Croxley station), restoring the existing Watford West and Watford Stadium stations, in their key locations serving the local community and schools and the new health campus / football ground respectively? This scheme would require only the reinstatement of the single line, so no additional land acquisition would be required (other than possibly a narrow strip for a new Ascot Road station); would require only one or two train units to operate, and would not have the massive adverse impacts on Watford Junction that the CRL will potentially have (if traffic levels were ever to reach the absurdly optimistic levels predicted by proponents of the scheme). Such a scheme could be operational within two years, given the will and support of the Council, and bring immediate benefits to the local community at vastly reduced cost. The scheme would not prevent a later implementation of the CRL if that were to eventually go ahead.</p> <p>Alternatively, please will the Council give serious consideration to making a through service to Rickmansworth a precondition of building the CRL? The new link would give the opportunity to run through services between Watford Junction and Rickmansworth stations, using the "north curve" of the triangle between Croxley Green and Moor Park stations. Some years ago this carried a solitary early-morning service between the towns, but with the development of retail centres in both towns and the concentration of healthcare services in Watford, providing a meaningful (even hourly) service on this route would be hugely beneficial to both towns, as well as relieving congested local roads of further traffic. The CRL seems to make no mention of even considering this as an option (although I have suggested it to them more than once). The council has invested in the railway between Watford and Rickmansworth before - the fine and popular Ebury Way cycle route was</p>	

Ref	Question	Response
27vi	<p>recovered from the deserted original railway route between the towns. Now is an opportunity to use what would be a new physical rail link for the benefit of all, in a genuinely useful development. (No-one would use the CRL as a means to gain rail access to London from Watford when that route would take three times as long as the direct route to Euston).</p> <p>The meeting focussed on the loss of allotment ground as a result of the proposed Health Campus expansion. Various sops were offered to the plot holders such as "additional open space in the form of a green boulevard", "improved access to the river", "re-provision of allotments" etc. Some questioners asked why the health campus could not be located in a less densely populated area. No-one asked the rather obvious question of whether relocating the football club had been considered. It seems a bizarre situation to be contemplating a major hospital expansion (and indeed even residential development) literally in the shadow of a major football ground, with the attendant noise and traffic problems that inevitably follow. Moving the club to an out-of-town location would eliminate these problems, massively ease congestion, parking and anti-social behaviour problems on match days, and provide the ideal (and already level!) location for an on-site expansion of the hospital. Some might say the football club brings people and therefore money into the town; however realistically very few local businesses really gain much from crowds hurrying to a game - those that do are mainly the "mobile" burger and coffee bars and they could gain as much or more from an out-of-town location.</p> <p>I appreciate the football club has invested substantially in its ground, and is continuing to do so. However we as residents have also contributed financially to the</p>	<p>There is no scope to move Watford Football Club as the cost would be prohibitive. Further Watford FC is in private ownership.</p>

Ref	Question	Response
27vii	<p>hospital development, the abortive building of a railway station for the club's benefit, implementation of (ineffective) controlled parking zones etc, yet our wasted money and inconvenience appear to count for nothing. Whilst using the football stadium alone would not provide the housing space that building on the allotments would, by eliminating this additional unwanted housing you will alleviate pressure on school spaces, not need to provide <i>additional</i> allotments for the extra population, not incur further traffic congestion and pollution from their cars, etc.. etc..</p> <p>On the downside you will not enjoy the benefits of selling off council land for private housing development, yet this appears to be the sole reason for not pursuing this option. Will the council therefore acknowledge that profits from selling Council land is the overriding factor in their current proposals to build on the Farm Terrace allotment site, rather than taking a more open-minded view of what is best for Watford in the long term?</p>	<p>Profit is not the overriding factor in the decision that will need to be taken with regard to Farm Terrace allotment. The meeting was at pains to point out that the quality of the final scheme (how it creates a good quality sustainable community for west Watford) is a major factor in how proposals from the private sector partner are evaluated.</p>
28	<p>Has any survey been done asking patients and staff at the existing hospital whether they would like Farm Terrace allotments retained.</p> <p>I would recommend councillors and developers visit the site of the old Chelsea Hospital where the allotments and orchards are central!</p> <p>No contact information provided.</p>	<p>Awaiting response from West Hertfordshire Hospitals NHS Trust.</p>
27	<p>Please communicate by email – surely everyone has it in this day and age.</p> <p>The AGM was posted on our gate with less than a week's notice – I missed it. Not good enough!</p>	<p>We currently only have postal addresses but will bear this in mind for the future,</p>

Ref	Question	Response
28	Proper fencing to improve security needed on allotments	Issues such as this one would be discussed by the Allotment Stakeholder Panel.
29	What was the result of a question from the floor about the legality of the rent rise on allotments by the council. Apparently a judge found it illegal the increase the council imposed. I personally had 100% increase.	The Council's decision to increase the allotment rents was correctly taken. The case that is being referred to was overturned on appeal and the appeal judge dismissed as ill-founded the argument brought by the allotment holder.