

# **Watford Rural Neighbourhood Designation Area 29/06/2026**

**POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE**  
**29 June 2026**

PART I

**Watford Rural Neighbourhood Area Designation Application**

**(DoF)**

**1 Summary**

1.1 The purpose of this report is to enable the Policy and Resources Committee to consider whether the council should designate the area submitted by Watford Rural Parish Council as a Neighbourhood Area.

**2 Recommendation**

2.1 That:

The Policy and Resources Committee approves the application submitted by Watford Rural Parish Council for a Neighbourhood Area covering the whole Watford Rural parished area.

Report prepared by: Aaron Roberts, Senior Planning Officer

**3 Details**

3.1 An application to designate the Watford Rural parished area as a Neighbourhood Area was submitted to Three Rivers District Council by Watford Rural Parish Council on 21 May 2026.

3.2 To be considered valid, applications for Neighbourhood Areas need to fulfill the requirements set out in Part 1, Regulation 5 of the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012. The requirements are:

- a map which identifies the area to which the area application relates;
- a statement explaining why this area is considered appropriate to be designated as a neighbourhood area; and
- a statement that the organisation or body making the area application is a relevant body for the purposes of Section 61G of the 1990 Act (Town and County Planning Act 1990 as amended by the Localism Act 2011).

3.3 Section 61G(2) of the 1990 Town and County Planning Act (amended by Schedule 9, Part 1 of the Localism Act 2011) defines a “relevant body” as:

*(a) a parish council, or*

*(b) an organisation or body which is, or is capable of being, designated as a neighbourhood forum (on the assumption that, for this purpose, the specified area is designated as a neighbourhood area).*

3.4 The application submitted by Watford Rural Parish Council meets the above requirements and is considered valid. A copy of the application is attached as Appendix 1 and Appendix 2 to this report and provides the following information:

- a map identifying the area to which the area application relates (Appendix 1);
- a statement explaining why Watford Rural parished area is considered appropriate for designation as a Neighbourhood Area (Appendix 2); and
- a statement confirming that Watford Rural Parish Council is a relevant body for the purposes of Section 61G of the 1990 Act (Appendix 2).

3.5 Regulation 5A of the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012 relates to the “designation of the whole area of a parish council” and can be seen below:

*(1) This regulation applies where—*

*(a) a local planning authority receive an area application from a parish council;*

*(b) the area specified in the application consists of the whole of the parish council’s area; and*

*(c) if any part of the specified area is part of a neighbourhood area, none of that neighbourhood area extends outside the parish council’s area.*

*(2) The local planning authority must exercise their powers under section 61G of the 1990 Act to designate the specified area as a neighbourhood area.*

*(3) Where this regulation applies, regulations 6 and 6A do not apply.*

3.6 Regulation 6 relates to publicising a Neighbourhood Area application and Regulation 6A relates to the statutory timescales. Given that in this case the area specified in the application consists of the whole of the Parish Council’s area, a consultation is not required and has not been undertaken.

#### **4 Options and Reasons for Recommendations**

4.1 Applications for Neighbourhood Areas must satisfy a number of criteria set out in the Town and County Planning Act 1990 (as amended by the Localism Act 2011) to be approved. These criteria are examined further below.

4.2 The following paragraphs of the 1990 Act set out the area criteria that should be used when considering applications submitted by Parish Councils.

Section 61G(3a)

*The specified area - In the case of an application by a parish council, must be one that consists of or includes the whole or any part of the area of the council*

Section 61G (4a)

*In determining an application the authority must have regard to – the desirability of designating the whole of the area of a parish council as a neighbourhood area.*

4.3 The area proposed consists of the whole of Watford Rural Parish Council's area. Officers therefore consider that the application meets the area criteria set out in the 1990 Act as outlined above.

4.4 Regulation 5A of the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012 states that if a local planning authority receive an area application from a parish council, the area specified in the application consists of the whole of the parish council's area and if any part of the specified area is part of a neighbourhood area, none of that neighbourhood area extends outside the parish council's area then the local planning authority must exercise their powers under section 61G of the 1990 Act to designate the specified area as a neighbourhood area.

4.5 Additionally, Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) sets out that:

*Where a parish council applies for the whole of the area of the parish to be designated as a neighbourhood area, the local planning authority must designate the whole of the area applied for. This includes where a parish applies to extend its existing neighbourhood area to its parish boundary. Exceptions to this are where the area applied for:*

- *has already been designated as a neighbourhood area which extends beyond the parish boundary; or*
- *forms part of another application that has not yet been determined.*

Paragraph: 032 Reference ID: 41-032-20170728

4.6 Given the wording of Regulation 5A of the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012 and the PPG, officers are of the opinion that the authority's discretion to reject the proposed area is effectively removed.

4.7 The officer recommendation is that:

The Policy and Resources Committee approves the application submitted by Watford Rural Parish Council for a Neighbourhood Area covering the whole Watford Rural parished area.

## **5 Next Steps**

5.1 If the proposed Neighbourhood Area is designated, details must be published as soon as possible following the decision on the council's website and in such other manner that is likely to bring the decision to designate to the attention of people living, working and carrying on business in the Area as detailed in Part 1 of Regulation 7 of the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012.

5.2 Should the decision be taken not to designate a Neighbourhood Area, the council is required to publish a document setting out the decision and the reasons for making that decision on the council's website and in such other manner that is likely to bring the decision to the attention of people living, working and carrying on business in the Area. This should be done as soon as possible following the decision, as set out in Part 2 of Regulation 7.

5.3 If the application for a Neighbourhood Area is approved, Watford Rural Parish Council will be able to produce a Neighbourhood Plan that can, following a referendum, be adopted as part of the statutory development plan for the designated Neighbourhood Area (Watford Rural parished area).

- 5.4 To become part of the statutory development plan, a Neighbourhood Plan must receive a majority 'Yes' vote in a local referendum organised by the Local Planning Authority. To reach the referendum stage a Neighbourhood Plan needs to progress through several stages. Completed Neighbourhood Plans will be submitted to the Local Planning Authority who will need to be satisfied that the submitted plan complies with the strategic priorities of the local development plan. Following a period of public consultation, the submitted plan will be examined by an independent inspector who is required to ensure the plan meets a set of basic conditions and legal requirements. Following a successful examination, a submitted Neighbourhood Plan can continue to a local referendum and, if successful, be adopted as part of the development plan.

## **6 Policy/Budget Reference and Implications**

- 6.1 The recommendations in this report are within the council's agreed policy and budgets.

## **7 Financial Implications**

- 7.1 The costs associated with publishing details of and consulting on applications for a Neighbourhood Area are included within the Local Plan budget.
- 7.2 A Government backed neighbourhood planning grant allows LPAs to claim £20,000 from when they issue a decision statement detailing their intention to send the plan to referendum. This will cover the costs of the referendum.
- 7.3 Producing an NDP allows Parish and Town Councils to increase the amount of Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) funds they receive from developments within their area from 15% to 25%.

## **8 Legal Implications**

- 8.1 The Town and County Planning Act 1990 (as amended by the Localism Act 2011) and The Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012 set out the requirements and procedures for the designation of Neighbourhood Areas. The 1990 Act places a duty on the council to designate Neighbourhood Areas. Additionally, the council has a statutory duty to provide advice and assistance (not financial) as deemed appropriate to Parish Councils in the preparation of Neighbourhood Plans.

## **9 Staffing Implications**

- 9.1 Matters relating to neighbourhood planning are dealt with in house by officers in the Local Plans team.

## **10 Customer Services Centre Implications**

- 10.1 The Customer Service Centre will be briefed about the neighbourhood area designation.

## **11 Communications and Website Implications**

- 11.1 The Digital Team will be briefed on how to update the website.

## **12 Equal Opportunities, Public Health, Environmental and Community Safety Implications**

- 12.1 None specific.

### 13 Risk and Health & Safety Implications

- 13.1 The council has agreed its risk management strategy which can be found on the website at <http://www.threerivers.gov.uk>. In addition, the risks of the proposals in the report have also been assessed against the council's duties under Health and Safety legislation relating to employees, visitors and persons affected by our operations. The risk management implications of this report are detailed below.
- 13.2 The subject of this report is covered by the Planning Policy and Conservation service plan. Any risks resulting from this report will be included in the risk register and, if necessary, managed within this plan.

Nature of Risk	Consequence	Suggested Control Measures	Response (tolerate, treat, terminate, transfer)	Risk Rating (combination of likelihood and impact)
Reputational damage of failing to agree the Neighbourhood Area	The council has a duty to support the Parish Council in their preparation of the Neighbourhood Plan.	Agree the Neighbourhood Area	Tolerate	3
The recommendation is rejected and the council fails to identify an appropriate area to be designated as a Neighbourhood Area. This would conflict with Government legislation and leave the council open to legal challenge		Agree the Neighbourhood Area	Tolerate	3

- 13.3 The above risks are scored using the matrix below. The council has determined its aversion to risk and is prepared to tolerate risks where the combination of impact and likelihood scores 6 or less.

Likelihood Very	Low	High	Very High	Very High
	4	8	12	16

	<b>Low</b> 3	<b>Medium</b> 6	<b>High</b> 9	<b>Very High</b> 12
	<b>Low</b> 2	<b>Low</b> 4	<b>Medium</b> 6	<b>High</b> 8
	<b>Low</b> 1	<b>Low</b> 2	<b>Low</b> 3	<b>Low</b> 4
	<b>Impact</b>			
	Low -----> Unacceptable			

**Impact Score**

- 4 (Catastrophic)
- 3 (Critical)
- 2 (Significant)
- 1 (Marginal)

**Likelihood Score**

- 4 (Very Likely (≥80%))
- 3 (Likely (21-79%))
- 2 (Unlikely (6-20%))
- 1 (Remote (≤5%))

13.4 In the officers' opinion none of the new risks above, were they to come about, would seriously prejudice the achievement of the Strategic Plan and are therefore operational risks. The effectiveness of the management of operational risks is reviewed by the Audit Committee annually.

**Background Papers**

Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended)

Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (as amended by the Localism Act 2011)

Community Infrastructure Levy Regulations 2010 (as amended)

Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012 (as amended)

The Neighbourhood Planning (Referendums) Regulations 2012

National Planning Policy Framework (December 2024)

Planning Practice Guidance

**APPENDICES**

Appendix 1 – Watford Rural Neighbourhood Area Map

Appendix 2 – Watford Rural Neighbourhood Area Designation Application

