

Frequently Asked Questions

New multi-storey car park (MSCP) at Watford General Hospital

This information sheet provides more details about the new multi-storey car park (MSCP) at the Watford General Hospital site.

The new MSCP will provide a better experience for patients, relatives and visitors, carers and staff. The trust is very grateful for all the support provided by Watford Borough Council and the LABV (local asset backed vehicle) to enable the new car park to be built.

When will the new car park open?

If everything goes to plan the new car park should be open for use by April or May 2022.

Will there be enough spaces for everyone who needs to access the hospital?

The new car park will provide 1,455 spaces, of which 1,290 are for hospital use (patients, visitors and staff). In addition, there will also be approximately 400 spaces around the existing hospital site which we expect to retain at least for the next few years and will give us flexibility in the future to create new car parking as part of our redevelopment plans. This is an increase of 83 spaces over current provision, although as we build new facilities there may be periods of time when we have to reduce the number of spaces around the site to facilitate the building work.

We will keep the total number of spaces under review over the coming years to see how things develop and work to ensure that there is enough parking to meet all users needs. New models of care will change the way people use the hospital – for example changes to outpatient care models will mean fewer attendances overall, although individual visits may take longer.

New ways of working for staff will also change requirements for staff car parking, with more staff working from home and options to relocate some non-clinical staff to work off site.

The new car park will make it much easier for us to monitor levels of demand at different times of the day and week. We will continuously review this to make sure that car parking is as easy as possible for patients, visitors and staff.

Will the new car park improve access for people with disabilities and allow for an increase in disabled car parking spaces?

The new MSCP will significantly improve access to the hospital for all car park users – effectively eliminating the need to walk up and down the steep slope on the site. The trust has also [released a short film](#) which shows how new buildings could be sited on land next to the hospital (as part of the redevelopment plans) and also where the new MSCP will be located.

The MSCP will provide 72 additional disabled parking bays, almost doubling the total currently available. The new car park will provide disabled parking bays at the most convenient points for access into the hospital.

How much will it cost to park and will it be ‘pay on exit’ rather than ‘pay on entry’ as it is currently?

We have not finalised plans for charging car park users yet but we are committed to reviewing charges and keeping charges as low as possible, whilst covering the operating costs of the car park. We will of course take national policy on car parking charges into account when we finalise our charging policy.

Options for discounted parking for regular users and reimbursement of charges for people on low incomes will continue in line with the [existing national healthcare travel costs scheme](#).

The new car park will utilise modern technology to enable much more flexible charging and payment options and make entry and exit from the MSCP quick and easy. Whilst the actual system has still to be finalised, the trust intends to adopt the principle of payment on exit and provide a range of flexible payment options.

Does the trust have a green travel plan and how does it plan to reduce the environmental impact of car journeys to the three hospital sites?

The trust is currently in the process of developing a Green Travel Plan as part of its sustainability strategy and to support the NHS targets for achieving net zero carbon by 2040. To support this the MSCP design will include photovoltaic panels on the roof, providing a renewable energy source, and 10% of parking bays will support electric vehicle charging.

The trust is working with Watford Borough Council on several schemes to reduce vehicle use and encourage alternative modes of transport.

The 404 car park spaces retained ‘existing car parking within the current hospital site’ provide the ability to reduce the number of car parking spaces at the site as these initiatives reduce the medium to long term demand.

How much will the new car park cost to build?

The total capital cost for the new facility is £39.2m (including VAT). This includes the site development and access road costs, in addition to the construction.

What process did the trust follow to secure the funding and ensure value for money?

The business case for the MSCP has followed the process mandated by HM Treasury, Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) and NHS Improvement and England (NHSI&E).

The strategic outline case (SOC) was approved by our board in May 2017 and by our regulators in February 2018. The outline business case (OBC) was submitted for approval in June 2018 and on the request of the regulators an addendum was produced in November 2018 to provide further information on the proposed 'user pay' Public Private Procurement (PPP) option.

In February 2020, following guidance from HM Treasury, the trust was asked to investigate the viability of an option based on funding sourced from public dividend capital (PDC). The full business case (FBC) concludes the mandated approval process, concluding that a PDC funded solution would provide the best value for money solution when considered against the stated investment objectives.

The Full Business Case was reviewed by NHS England's Joint Investment Committee earlier this year and formal approval to proceed to contract signature was received in March 2021. Contracts and a range of other technical supporting documentation were then signed – meaning we are now all systems go for a new car park to be built and ready to operate by Spring 2022.

The proposed MSCP solution has also been subject to planning scrutiny and challenge by the Planning Authority, who have granted consent to proceed.

How is the new car park being funded?

The new car park has been funded through 'public dividend capital' provided by Her Majesty's Treasury. A range of different funding options were considered as part of the business case process, but this was the option that best fitted with government policy and was considered to provide the best overall value for money.

How will the new car park be managed?

The new car park will be constructed using public finance and once built it will be owned by the trust. In 2021 the trust will tender for a company to manage the car parks across all three hospital sites (including the MSCP at Watford General) when our current contract ends in March 2022.

What role has Watford Borough Council played in the development of the car park?

The new car park will be built on land owned by Watford Borough Council and will include provision of 165 spaces for use by the Riverwell development scheme. The cost of these spaces will be funded through an agreement between the trust and the LABV (local asset backed vehicle) which provides for full repayment of both capital and operating costs. The LABV is a 50/50 joint venture between Watford Borough Council and Kier Property established to facilitate the development of this area of west Watford, now known as Riverwell.

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