

the meriden

Regeneration update and neighbourhood news



Find out about the
Random Café and how it
is helping the community
live more sustainably.



watford
community
housing

Welcome to The Meriden

As we approach the end of the year we reflect on the great progress made throughout 2021 and look ahead to what's in store in early 2022.

This year has been a game of two halves. It began in a lockdown but is ending with life mostly back to normal, although perhaps a different kind of normal than we were used to before the pandemic.

As we reported in the last newsletter, we continued with construction activities despite the restrictions caused by Covid-19, and after establishing new site safety measures. This means that we have made excellent progress this year.

Not only have we delivered much-needed high-quality and affordable new housing but we are on track for all shops to open their doors to customers before Christmas. Find out more on pages 8 and 10.

We're delighted with construction progress but mindful, as always, that regeneration is not just about bricks and mortar, it's about positive social and economic change as well. On pages 18 and 19 we review the great opportunities that our contractor, Mulalley, has brought to the community and we also introduce you to the newly-appointed Community Regen Team who will be working with us to help support and strengthen the community.

Reducing the impact of climate change is a top global priority, so it's important to know how we can make a difference at a local level and all do our bit to help the environment. On page 14 we find out about Random Café and discover all the great work it is doing in the community to reduce food waste and promote a more sustainable way of life.

We wish you all a healthy and happy time this festive season and a great start to the new year. See you in 2022.



01

- + Regeneration update:
 - Christmas arrives early at The Grove Academy
 - Construction underway on Flexi-care housing



02-03

- + Regeneration update:
 - Improving your services
 - Our community work



04-05

- + Regeneration update:
 - A look back at 2021



06-07

- + Regeneration update:
 - Introducing our new site manager
 - Development plan



08-09

- + Regeneration update:
 - Delivery of new homes on track

10-11

- + Regeneration update:
 - Happy shopping
 - Interim parking facility

12-13

- + Regeneration update:
 - Phase 2 - traffic management plan
 - Upcoming traffic diversions



14-15

- + Spotlight on Jane Johnson



16-17

- + Regeneration update:
 - Urban tree planting
 - 5 tips for a greener Christmas

18-19

- + Regeneration update:
 - Local talent
 - Making positive change



20

- + Neighbourhood news:
 - Have your say on Herts police
 - Halloween fun



22

- + Future events

Christmas arrives early at The Grove Academy



Mulalley's Site Manager, Michael Page, was delighted to deliver this year's Christmas tree to The Grove Academy primary school.

Donating a Christmas tree has become an annual tradition and forms part of a special relationship between Mulalley and the school in recognition of the proximity of the school to site. School Business Manager, Chris Kelly, is photographed receiving the tree, which will be decorated and displayed for the entire school community to enjoy this festive season.

Save time - do it online



Many residents have already signed up for an online account, which allows them to manage lots of aspects of their tenancy through the **Watford Community Housing website**.

All you need to sign up is your tenancy number. Once you've signed up, you'll need to go through a short verification process and then you'll be free to go online and book your repairs, manage your tenancy, pay your rent, message us directly and much more.

Visit www.wcht.org.uk and click on 'Your account' to sign up now!

Construction underway on Flexi-care housing

During the next phase of works we are concentrating on the delivery of 51 Flexi-care apartments - assisted living accommodation predominantly for older people within the community.

We are aware of some rumours circulating recently about the space being used as an alcohol or drug rehabilitation centre, which may have caused concern for some people. We can confirm that no such centre is being built and the original plans communicated to residents in 2019 have not changed. We hope this reassures everyone.



Improving your services

North Meriden & Garston

Romana Lawson
01923 209 114

South Meriden & Aldenham

George Aspinall
01923 209 030

We've been making lots of changes lately to improve services for all our residents.

This included the Big Door Knock that took place in September, an event that enabled us to reconnect with residents following limitations to our services over lockdown, and to find out what matters to you and what we can do to help.

We have also recently appointed two dedicated Housing Officers for the Meriden: George Aspinall and Romana Lawson. George and Romana are here to help you and you can talk to them about anything - from your rent account and tenancy to neighbourhood issues and anti-social behaviour.

THE BIG DOOR KNOCK

Our community work

We're passionate about building better communities. If you have a community project, or if you want to get involved, we can provide support.

Our community work is really important to us - we know that by working with residents we can help to create friendlier places to live and make a real difference to people's lives. Whether it's supporting community groups, promoting events or running initiatives that help people in their daily lives, we are committed to helping our communities reach their full potential. There are lots of ways you can get involved with what we do - whether you need funding or support for your group or event, or you want to help shape our services.

Funding

One of the key parts of our community work is funding projects, events, organisations and groups who are doing incredible things. We have three different funding pools which ensure the right funds are given to the right people.

Funding requests are reviewed once a month by our funding panel, which includes residents. If you are planning to apply for funding, please make sure you submit your request as early as possible so that we have time to get in touch if we need additional information from you.

Community Chest Fund

The Community Chest supports community events, initiatives and projects that require funding of £500 or less. Previously, Community Chest funding has helped to provide everything from computers to café equipment.

If you are part of a group that works to make life better for people or the environment, we can provide you with the money to make it happen.

Community Development Fund

In response to the coronavirus pandemic, we are reshaping our Community Development Fund to provide support to small charities and organisations in the voluntary sector that are providing assistance to the local community.



Tasha, our Senior Community Engagement Officer meets Jane from Random Café

In order to be eligible for this Covid-19 grant, you will need to meet one of the below criteria:

- Provide a service/project to support the wellbeing of the community
- Provide a service/project for vulnerable people

Tenant/Residents' Association Fund

Lots of our local areas have tenant or residents' associations, in order to represent and help their community. We offer these groups help to get started and ongoing support and funding. If you are part of a tenant/residents' association and you're looking for help with a start-up, an event, or an annual or special grant, please get in touch.

If you have any questions about applications for funding or support, please contact our Community Engagement Team. Email community@wcht.org.uk or call 01923 209 183.



Meet our new Senior Community Engagement Officer, Tasha Hiscock

I have been working alongside the Meriden community for a number of years now. Before joining Watford Community Housing I previously managed the Meriden Community Centre and I am so pleased to be able to continue that involvement in my new role.

I work closely with the Community Engagement Team and part of our role is to increase

engagement and enhance community spirit within the neighbourhoods. We want to get to know all of our residents and find out how we can help.

If you have any questions please don't hesitate to get in touch. Email tasha.hiscock@wcht.org.uk or call 07899 935 249.

I look forward to hearing from you!



Local resident representatives given tour of new homes



Site Assistant, Chi Chi



Resident, Lyn Gurney



Tasha (left) and Jane from Random Café (right)

A look back at 2021

And what a year it has been! It's always helpful to pause at the end of a year and reflect upon shared experiences and achievements before the start of a new year.

Despite beginning the year in a lockdown, we have steamed ahead with construction (with the required safety measures in place) and have delivered lots of much-needed housing and shops have started opening on the new retail parade. Many residents moved into their new homes this year, including Lyn Gurney, who moved into her bungalow in the summer.

We have welcomed many new faces to the regeneration team and we have provided a permanent home for the not-for-profit, sustainable living project, Random Café, (find out more about the café's great work on page 14). We look forward to lots more exciting achievements in 2022.



Finishing touches to new homes before residents move in



Site Manager, Michael Page



Introducing our new site manager

Meet Gary Crouch our new site manager and rising star within the construction team.

Gary joined the team to progress construction of Robin House (Block D) and Drake House (Block E1) but more recently he has been kept busy overseeing the completion of the new bungalows.

Gary's dedication and resourcefulness have impressed local residents: Jenny, who recently moved into her new bungalow commented, "nothing was too much trouble for Gary which helped make my move go smoothly." Fellow resident, Kay, added, "he [Gary] doesn't make false promises, if Gary says he'll do something he won't give up until he has fixed the problem."

We hope you join us in welcoming Gary to the team!

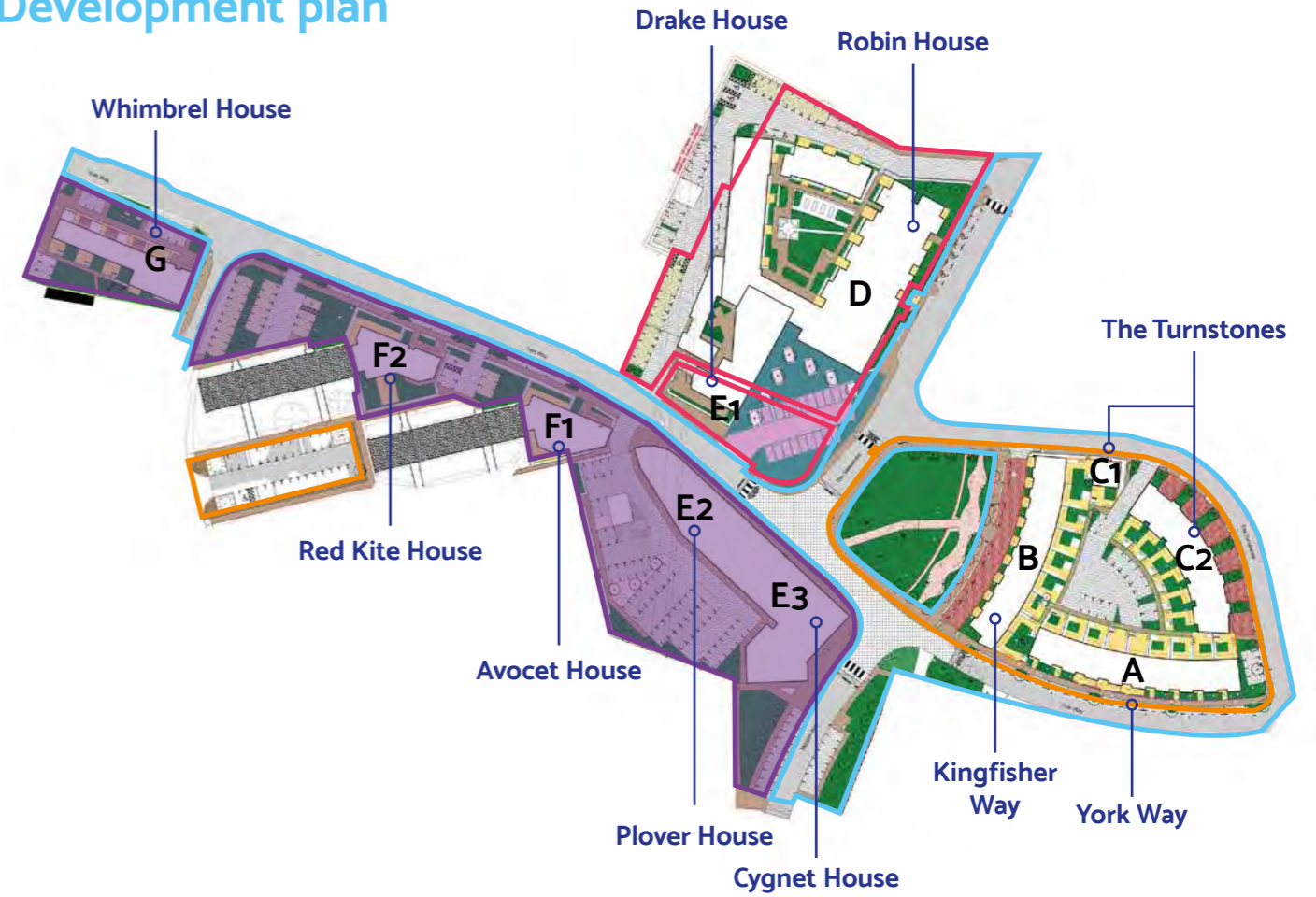


"Gary has been a diamond."

Kay, resident





Gary meets happy residents, Kay and Ron

Development plan



The Meriden regeneration masterplan

Key with project milestones

 Section 2	Block A (full completion) - August 2022 Block B (full completion) - May 2023 Block C1, C2 - May 2023	 Section 4	Block E1, D - May 2023
 Section 3 (Phase 1)	Block G, F1, F2 - Complete Block E2, E3 - Complete	 Section 5	External works, new services and park - May 2023



Indicative CGIs of development

Delivery of new homes on track

We are on track to deliver a further 56 new homes by the end of this year, a great achievement considering the many obstacles that we have faced along the way, such as the delays caused by the pandemic and lockdown. The delivery includes 23 new apartments in Plover House (E2) and Cygnet House (E3).

Our Home Move Officer, Chennel Lamb, has been busy helping residents move into their new homes at Plover and Cygnet Houses. We are so pleased with the positive responses from residents who are delighted with their new homes. One resident was moved to tears when shown her new 2-bedroom apartment, declaring it 'so beautiful'.

Moves into these new homes will take place before the end of this year. They will be occupied by tenants via Watford Borough Council's Housing Register.

There is lots to look forward to next year as well. The final bungalow at Block A on York Way is nearing completion and we will be focussing our efforts on Blocks C1 and C2 at The Turnstones, and family houses in Block B (Kingfisher Way). We will also be working on the construction of the Flexi-care apartments – assisted living for older people – as well as additional apartments at Drake House (E1), a small Community Hub and a Market Square.



Chennel Lamb, Home Move Officer



Groundwork progress on Drake and Robin Houses



Parking update

Over the last few months, we have focussed our attention on parking availability and capacity across the Meriden which will hopefully alleviate local concerns.

This month we signed a legal agreement (Section 278) with the council enabling us to create more parking bays and make large-scale highway improvements across the estate. We have also been able to fast-track certain elements of the project delivery linked to parking. This means that parking that wasn't originally due to be delivered until the end of the construction project has been brought forward.

Residents moving into the recently completed Plover House (E2) and Cygnet House (E3) now have access to secure designated parking spaces. This dedicated parking provision will not only benefit residents living in these blocks but it will have wider positive implications as it will lessen the overall demand for car parking across the estate.



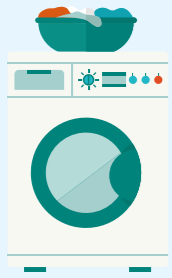
Happy shopping – an update on the new retail parade

It's not long now until the retail units open along the new shopping parade. We have worked closely with the eight shop owners and helped resource the fit-out process to ensure the buildings are attractive spaces for both employees and shoppers.

In the last issue we celebrated the opening of the new Co-op and since then the new Post Office has also opened. The remaining six shops will follow at intervals from now on with the shopping parade being fully operational by Christmas.



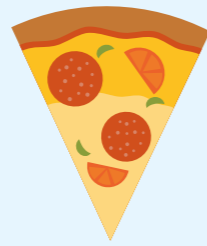
Look out for:



Unit 1
Jet Maid Launderette



Unit 2
Meriden Hairdressers



Unit 3
Chiqizza



Unit 4
Meriden Café



Unit 5
Meriden Fish Bar



Unit 6
New Hope Charity Shop

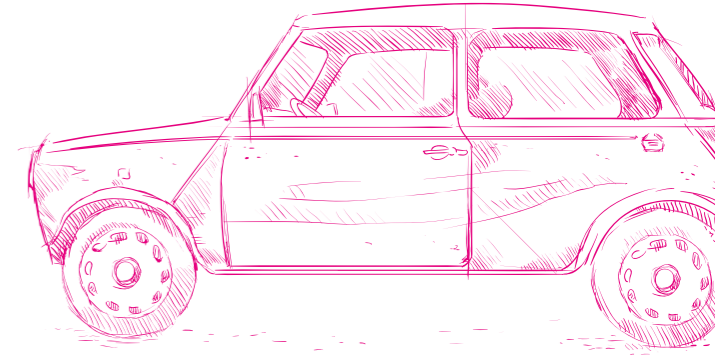


Unit 7
Post Office



Unit 8
The Co-op

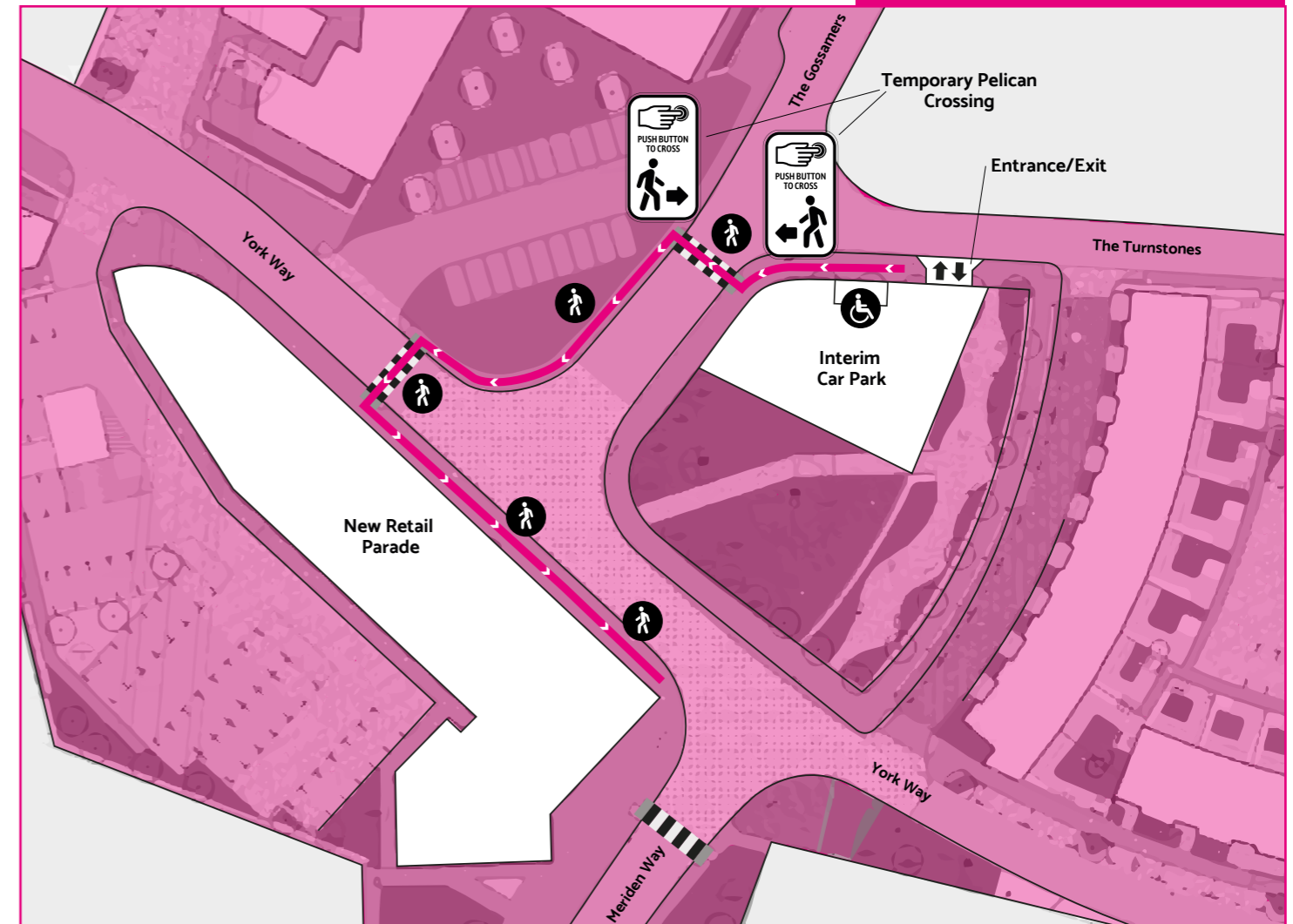
Interim parking facility



We are excited that the shopping parade is nearing completion and look forward to the retail units opening towards the end of this year. The permanent car park at Market Square is still under construction so we are building an interim parking facility so that residents can easily access the shops while construction completes.

We identified Mulalley's site compound as the ideal location for the interim car park to make a visit to the shops as easy as possible for residents. Recently, the site cabins have been relocated to make space for parking. The map below shows the location of the interim car park and plots the route that shoppers will need to follow to access the retail parade. The interim parking facility will be ready for use in the early part of next year.

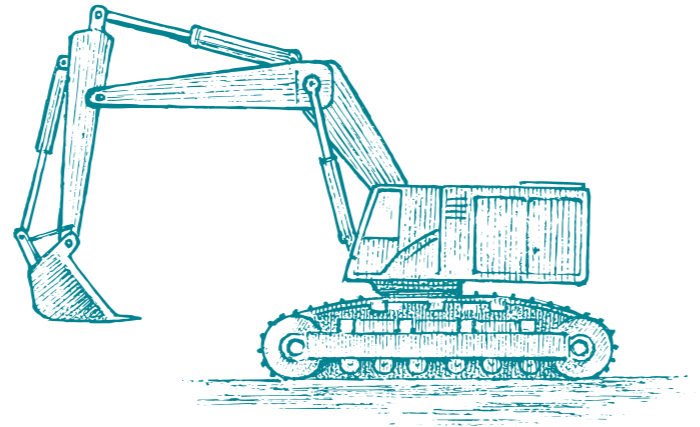
When the permanent car park is complete, at least a dozen spaces will be available and parking will be free. The parking spaces will be available for people using the shopping facilities only.



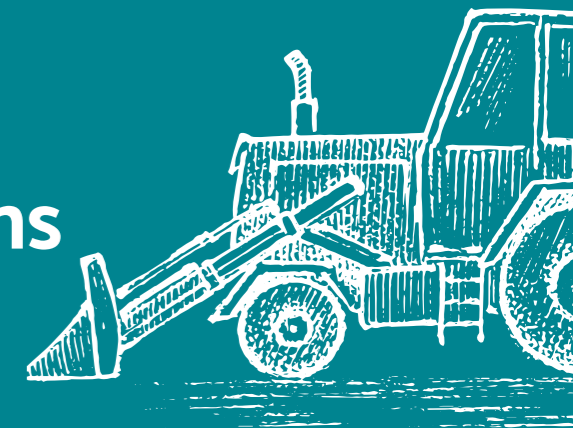
Phase 2 – traffic management plan

Over the last few months, we have been developing a revised traffic management plan for the new sites at Robin House (Block D) and Drake House (Block E1) in response to residents' concerns over road safety and congestion. We strive to work in partnership with residents and learn from each phase of the build so that we can continually improve the way we work.

The new traffic management plan (below) shows the new route for construction vehicles entering and leaving the site. The new plan requires construction vehicles to follow a forward motion one-way course meaning that no vehicles will need to turn or reverse to exit the site. In addition, construction traffic will not operate on any residential roads within the Meriden. We are confident that these changes will improve road safety and reduce traffic congestion overall.



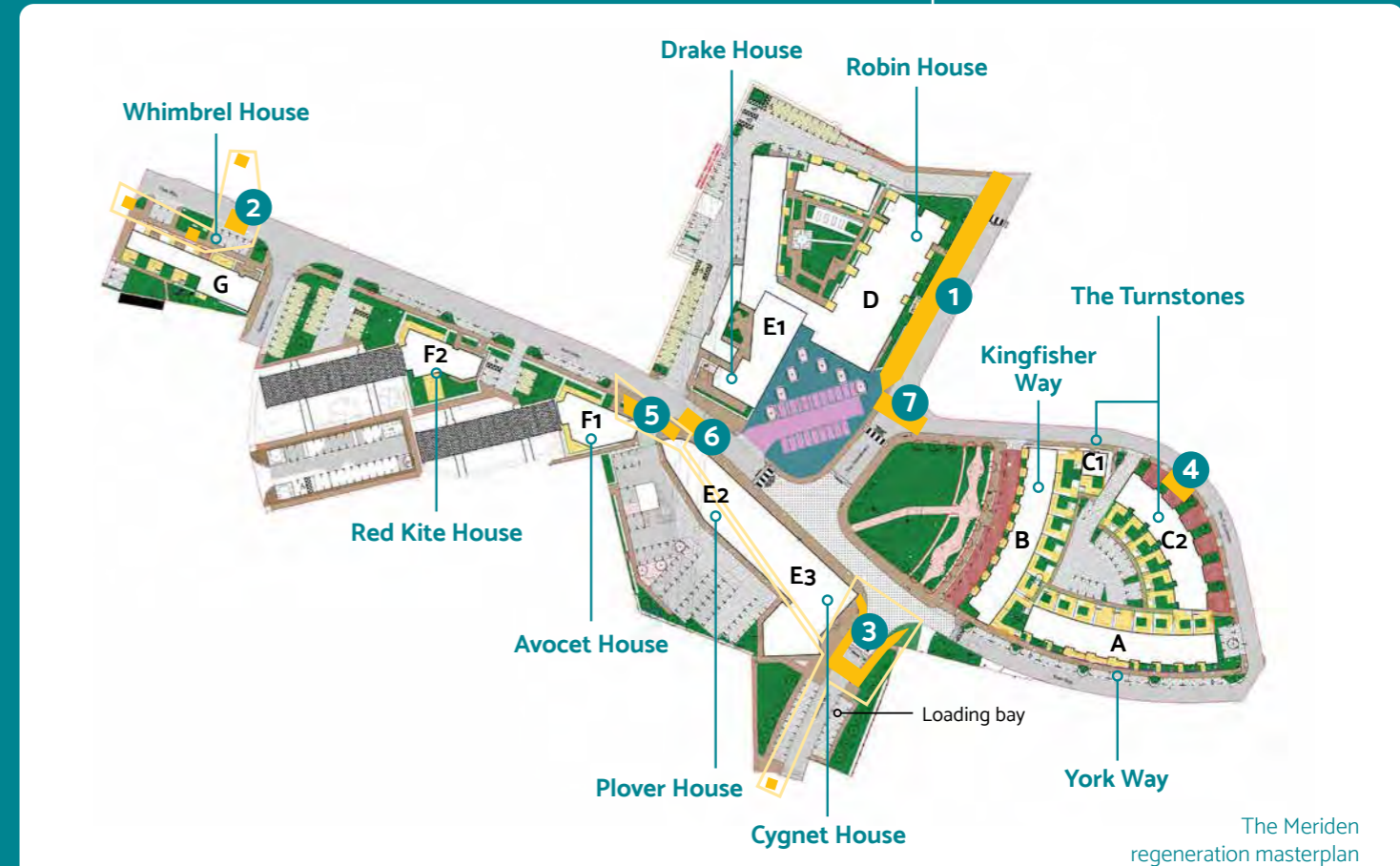
Upcoming traffic diversions



As we enter the next critical stage of construction, there will be a number of diversions/temporary changes to traffic to allow for major works.

As always, we will do our best to limit the level of disruption and ensure that these diversions are in place for as short a time as possible. The map below highlights the diversions and associated timescales.

As part of these works we are also concentrating on completing the loading bay to facilitate deliveries to the retail parade.



Planned works schedule

- 1 Complete**
Works on ducts and connections by UKPN.
- 2 December 2021**
Electrical diversions (grass verge closures & controlled road crossing).
Duration: 1 week
- 3 January 2022**
Electrical diversions (footpath & controlled road closure) for ductwork in Meriden Way, requiring alternate footpath closures & road crossing.
Duration: 3 weeks
- 4 April 2022**
Electrical diversions gas and electric services (parking bays suspension).
Duration: 1 week
- 5 April 2022**
New water connection (controlled road crossing).
Duration: 1 week
- 6 April 2022**
New gas connection (controlled road crossing).
Duration: 1 week
- 7 December 2022**
New mains sewer connection (controlled road crossing (The Gossamers) road closure (The Turnstones)).
Duration: 2 weeks



Spotlight on Jane Johnson

“Our mission is simple – it’s about feeding our bellies and not our bins,” says Jane, a local volunteer at the Random Café, which has recently set up permanent home at Meriden Gardens in the heart of the Meriden community.

“It’s a shocking statistic but every year in the UK 15 million tonnes of perfectly edible food ends up in landfill and we have made it our job to work in partnership with farms, supermarkets, local businesses and shops to intercept this food and put it to good use rather than waste.

Not only does our work reduce food waste but it also reduces waste of resources that have gone into producing the food, such as land, water and fuel.”

This is a true not-for-profit initiative – run by the community, for the community. A hub that campaigns for a fairer food system alongside its tireless work to reduce food waste and promote sustainability.

“We’re so pleased that Watford Community Housing has recognised our vital work and has created a permanent space for us. For four years we moved location several times, but now that we are settled we can look forward to increasing our reach and saving even more food that is destined for the bin.”

The Random Café is open three days a week (Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday) and operates on a pay-as-you-feel (PAYF) basis. Choose from a menu of hot and cold drinks, cakes and hot meals and decide how much you feel the meal is worth or what you can afford.

“The idea is simple but hugely effective and it allows the community to come along on the journey and feel inspired by how our work and their support contributes to a greener, more sustainable way of life.”

randomcafewatford.com



Urban tree planting

On Friday 19 November we held our inaugural meeting of the Tree Committee attended by local stakeholders and residents. It was a fantastic collaborative event and we will publish more details next year.

When the Tree Committee was first set up, the main focus of partners was to identify areas where we could increase the number of trees and find suitable alternative locations for trees that could not be planted in the original locations agreed at the beginning of the project. However, the group's focus has quickly widened to include a number of management and sustainable conservation initiatives that will improve and activate the green spaces across the Meriden as part of the wider economic and social regeneration of the estate.

One of the initiatives we are looking at is the creation of an urban orchard as part of a Watford-wide project to plant 10 mini orchards across the town. Watford Chamber of Commerce is running a scheme that helps the community to support and establish an orchard, creating a shared space to nurture and harvest fruit. Urban orchards are designed to help tackle social isolation and re-connect the community with food production and help people appreciate that food is a precious resource, not a commodity to be wasted. This is a fantastic scheme that will support other sustainable and environmental projects that are happening across the Meriden already such as the Random Café.

Watford Chamber of Commerce is also offering other opportunities to plant trees on a wider scale and make the area greener as part of the Queen's Green Canopy (a nationwide tree planting project in honour of Her Majesty's 70 years of service to the nation). To support this venture trees will be donated by The More Trees campaign. For both the orchard and general tree planting opportunities a local arborist, Nik Holtom, will train the community on how to look after the trees.

We are excited about the range of positive opportunities on the horizon and the Tree Committee would like to pass on special thanks to Julie Hughes (Tree Manager at Watford Borough Council) for her immense contribution to the project. We will provide regular updates on progress in future issues.

The Tree Committee (attendees 19 November)

Watford Community Housing Regeneration Team	Watford Borough Council
Watford Community Housing Estate Contracts Team	Veolia
Mulalley (Regeneration Partner)	Friends of the Meriden
Chamber of Commerce	Random Café
	Local councillor



5 tips for a greener Christmas



1 Recycle your real Christmas tree

It's important your Christmas tree isn't left to rot in landfill. The council will collect unwanted trees after Christmas if left out near your bin and will recycle them into mulch for local parks and woodland areas, just make sure all decorations are removed first.

2 Buy forest-friendly Christmas cards or send e-cards

The Woodland Trust shop stocks a great selection and the proceeds go towards supporting Britain's woodlands. Why not recycle Christmas cards by turning them into gift tags for next year's presents?

3 Shop local

Support local businesses this year and choose to buy at least some of your gifts close to home.

4 Reduce unnecessary waste

Plan all your meals for the festive season in advance and get creative with leftovers. Not only will this be better for your wallet but it will mean you buy less and limit unnecessary food waste. If you're having a party avoid using throwaway plates and cups.

5 Donate to charity

Donate any unwanted Christmas gifts to your local charity shop rather than throwing them away.



Local talent

Over the last two years, Mulalley has created employment opportunities for local people as part of their commitment to the wider regeneration of the Meriden.

As we approach the end of the year, Mulalley has renewed its focus in this area and created a number of new opportunities. Meet two of the newest members who joined the team within the last few weeks.



Meet Martin

Martin lives on the Meriden and has recently gained his CPCS qualification. Martin will be involved in traffic marshalling and the logistical elements of the construction project.

Martin is excited about working on this project and pleased to be part of something that is having a positive impact on the wider community.



Meet Said

Said lives in North Watford, just a few minutes' drive from the Meriden. Said is currently employed as a labourer, but Mulalley is supporting him to attend a local college where he is studying to become an electrician. Mulalley is hoping that he will progress his qualifications and continue both his local relationship and progress his career by working on the project.

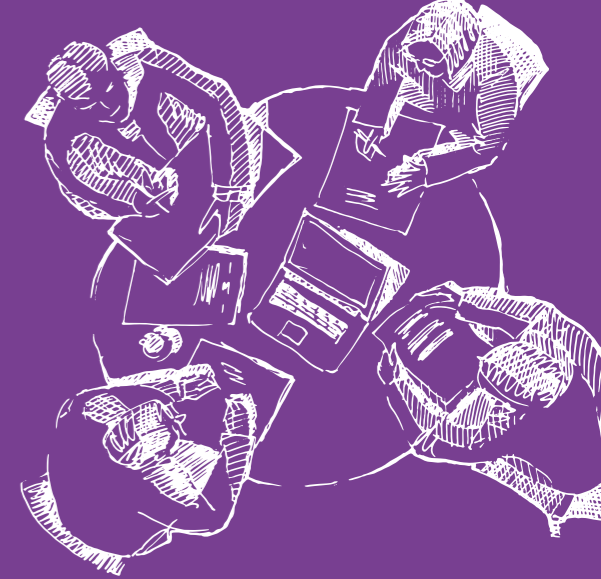
If you are interested in a career in construction and live on the Meriden then please drop your CV into the Site Office or contact Rob Jones on 07827 884 403 for more information.

Making positive change

Over the next year we are working towards a better understanding of the wider challenges facing local residents and how we can develop an action plan that will promote positive change.

Regeneration is not just about physical space and the building of new homes; it is also about developing initiatives that will make a difference to the local community on a social and economic level. This includes employment opportunities, spaces for the community to come together such as activities and clubs, education facilities etc. As part of the regeneration project we want to transform the Meriden into a more successful, thriving and sustainable neighbourhood.

Following a tender process we have appointed a Community Regen Team to undertake research on our behalf. The team's work will give us a better understanding of community needs and enable us to develop a list of priorities, which will help inform future activity. We will provide further updates on their research in future newsletters.



Supporting the regeneration of the Meriden

We are a team of community development practitioners who are passionate and committed to supporting and strengthening local communities.

We have worked with lots of residents' groups, community and voluntary organisations, housing associations and local authorities assisting them to engage residents and deliver great projects in communities.

Over the next few months we will be working on the Meriden to research and map local activities, organisations and services available for local residents and identify any gaps in services. The results and recommendations will be fed back to Watford Community Housing to help shape the next phase of the Meriden regeneration.

We are delighted to have been appointed by Watford Community Housing to deliver this piece of work and are looking forward to getting to know the local community.

To find out more about Community Regen visit www.communityregen.net

Community Regen Team

Paul Bragman
Director



Kyle Bernath
Project Coordinator



Nazra Zuhyle
Project Support



Have your say on Herts police

You can now use 'Echo' – Herts Constabulary's community voice platform – to let them know what you think their priorities should be and how you'd like to see your area policed.

You can do this anonymously and your feedback will help to shape Herts Constabulary's campaigns and initiatives going forward.

There are three separate areas of Watford being covered – outer, north and central. To have your say, just go online and type in the link for your area. For the Meriden, please visit the North Watford link:

North Watford



Get crime alerts on your phone

Online Watch Link (OWL) has launched a new app that sends alerts and instant notifications about local crime, scams and crime prevention advice straight to your phone or tablet.

The OWL app alerts you to incidents near your home or current location, if you're in one of the participating areas. You will receive alerts about incidents such as robbery or missing people, and can view anything less urgent on the app. You can also set up custom alerts for issues such as crime relating to local businesses, shops or dogs.

Other features include being able to share alerts on social media, reporting a crime online, and finding out who your local police officers are.

You can download the app by searching the App Store or Google Play for 'owl crime alerts'. No registration or login necessary.



Halloween fun

This Halloween things got spooky on Kingfisher Way. One of the new family houses transformed into a haunted house to delight local trick-or-treaters. The scary decorations attracted a large crowd throughout the evening, prompting the resident to plan to 'go bigger' next year. Hopefully this can become an annual event with more residents joining the fun.



BECOME A COMMUNITY CHAMPION



People may be feeling lonely & isolated after lockdown.

Help them join activities listed in our **What's On** guide.

Together we can help reduce loneliness in Watford & Three Rivers!



Call **01923 606 447**
Email neighbourstogether@w3rt.org



FIND OUT MORE
<https://w3rt.org/news/460404>

Future events



Premier League Kicks

Meriden Community Centre

Includes youth football and dance sessions on Mondays and Tuesdays and a youth club on Tuesdays and Fridays.

All sessions are FREE to attend.

For more information contact Chloe Harris via email chloe.harris@watfordfc.com or call 07707 289 043.

Random Café

Meriden Gardens

Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday:
10am – 2pm



Councillor Surgery

Community Centre on York Way

Every Friday: 9.30am – 12pm



MRA Coffee Mornings

Meriden Community Centre

Every Wednesday: 10am – 12pm.
Everyone is welcome!



Meriden Community Choir

Meriden Community Centre

Second and fourth Thursday
of every month: 8pm – 9pm

Construction enquiries:

Rob Jones

Senior Project Manager at Mulalley

T: 07827 884 403

E: robert.jones@mulalley.co.uk

If you know anyone who would like to receive a copy of this newsletter please contact Tasha Hiscock:

Tasha.Hiscock@wcht.org.uk