

Staff Pension Scheme of Nottingham Building Society

Statement of Investment Principles

Barnett Waddingham LLP

August 2021

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Introduction

- 1.1. This is the Statement of Investment Principles prepared by the Trustees of the Staff Pension Scheme of Nottingham Building Society (the Scheme). This statement sets down the principles which govern the decisions about investments that enable the Scheme to meet the requirements of:
 - the Pensions Act 1995, as amended by the Pensions Act 2004;
 - the Occupational Pension Schemes (Investment) Regulations 2005 as amended by the Occupational Pension Schemes (Investment) (Amendment) Regulations 2010;
 - the Occupational Pension Schemes (Investment and Disclosure) (Amendment and Modification) Regulations 2018; and
 - the Occupational Pension Schemes (Investment and Disclosure) (Amendment) Regulations 2019.
- 1.2. In preparing this statement, the Trustees have consulted Nottingham Building Society, the Employer, and obtained advice from Barnett Waddingham LLP, the Trustees' investment consultants. Barnett Waddingham is authorised and regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority.
- 1.3. This statement has been prepared with regard to the 2001 Myners review of institutional investment (including subsequent updates).
- 1.4. The Trustees will review this Statement at least every three years or if there is a significant change in any of the areas covered by the Statement or the demographic profile of members.
- 1.5. The investment powers of the Trustees are set out in Clause 3(e) of the Definitive Trust Deed and Rules, dated 21 June 1995. This statement is consistent with those powers.

2. Choosing investments

- 2.1. The Trustees' policy is to set the overall investment target and then monitor the performance of their managers against that target. In doing so, the Trustees consider the advice of their professional advisers, who they consider to be suitably qualified and experienced for this role.
- 2.2. The day-to-day management of the Scheme's assets is delegated to one or more investment managers. The Scheme's investment managers are detailed in Appendix 1 to this Statement. The investment managers are authorised and regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority, and are responsible for stock selection and the exercise of voting rights.
- 2.3. The Trustees review the appropriateness of the Scheme's investment strategy on an ongoing basis. This review includes consideration of the continued competence of the investment manager with respect to its performance within any guidelines set. The Trustees will also consult the Employer before amending the investment strategy.

3. Investment objectives

3.1. The Trustees have discussed key investment objectives in light of an analysis of the Scheme's liability profile as well as the constraints the Trustees face in achieving these objectives. As a result, the Trustees' main investment objectives are:

- to ensure that the Scheme can meet the members' entitlements under the Trust Deed and Rules as they fall due;
- to achieve a long-term positive real return;
- to manage the expected volatility of the returns achieved in order to control the level of volatility in the Scheme's required contribution levels;
- to invest in assets of appropriate liquidity which will generate income and capital growth to meet, together with new contributions from the Employer, the cost of current benefits which the Scheme provides;
- to reduce the risk of the assets failing to meet the liabilities over the long term;
- to minimise the long-term costs of the Scheme by maximising the return on the assets whilst having regard to the above objectives.

3.2. The Trustees are aware of the relationship that exists between the particular investment portfolio that is held and the level of funding of the Scheme's liabilities. The Trustees have obtained exposure to investments that they expect will meet the Scheme's objectives as best as possible.

4. Kinds of investments to be held

4.1. The Scheme is permitted to invest in a wide range of assets including equities, bonds, cash, property and alternatives.

4.2. The Trustees monitor from time-to-time the employer-related investment content of their portfolio as a whole and will take steps to alter this should they discover this to be more than 5% of the portfolio. Typically, this check is carried out annually by the Scheme's auditors.

5. The balance between different kinds of investments

5.1. The Scheme invests in assets that are expected to achieve the Scheme's objectives. The allocation between different asset classes is contained within Appendix 1 to this Statement.

5.2. The Trustees consider the merits of both active and passive management for the various elements of the portfolio and may select different approaches for different asset classes. The current arrangements are set out in Appendix 1 to this Statement.

5.3. From time to time, the Scheme may hold cash and therefore deviate from its strategic or tactical asset allocation in order to accommodate for any short-term cashflow requirements or any other unexpected items.

5.4. The Trustees are aware that the appropriate balance between different kinds of investments will vary over time and therefore the Scheme's asset allocation will be expected to change as the Scheme's liability profile matures.

6. Risks

6.1. The Trustees have considered the following risks for the Scheme with regard to its investment policy and the Scheme's liabilities, and considered ways of managing/monitoring these risks:

Risk versus the liabilities

The Trustees will monitor and review the investment strategy with respect to the liabilities in conjunction with each actuarial valuation. The investment strategy will be set with consideration to the appropriate level of risk required for the funding strategy as set out in the Scheme's Statement of Funding Principles.

Covenant risk

The creditworthiness of the Employer and the size of the pension liability relative to the Employer's earnings are monitored on a regular basis. The appropriate level of investment risk is considered with reference to the strength of the Employer covenant.

Solvency and mismatching

The risk is addressed through the asset allocation strategy and ongoing triennial actuarial valuations. The Trustees are aware that the asset allocation required to minimise the volatility of the solvency position may be different from that which would minimise the volatility on the Scheme's funding basis.

Asset allocation risk

The asset allocation is detailed in Appendix 1 to this Statement and is monitored on a regular basis by the Trustees.

Investment manager risk

The Trustees monitor the performance of each of the Scheme's investment managers on a regular basis, in addition to having meetings with each manager as frequently as is appropriate in order to review performance. The Trustees have a written agreement with each investment manager, which contains a number of restrictions on how each investment manager may operate.

Governance risk

Each asset manager is expected to undertake good stewardship and positive engagement in relation to the assets held. The Trustees monitor these and will report on the managers' practices in their annual Implementation Statement.

ESG/ climate risk

The Trustees have considered that long-term financial risks to the Scheme and ESG factors, as well as climate risk, are potentially financially material and will continue to develop its policy to consider these, alongside other factors, when selecting or reviewing the Scheme's investments in order to avoid unexpected losses.

Concentration risk

Where appropriate, each investment manager is expected to manage broadly diversified portfolios and to spread assets across a number of individual shares and securities.

Liquidity risk

The Scheme invests in assets such that there is a sufficient allocation to liquid investments that can be converted into cash at short notice given the Scheme's cashflow requirements. The Scheme's administrators assess the level of cash held in order to limit the impact of the cashflow requirements on the investment policy.

Currency risk

The Scheme's liabilities are denominated in sterling. The Scheme may gain exposure to overseas currencies by investing in assets that are denominated in a foreign currency or via currency management. Currency hedging can be employed to manage the impact of exchange rate fluctuations.

Loss of investment

The risk of loss of investment by each investment manager and custodian is assessed by the Trustees. This includes losses beyond those caused by market movements (e.g. default risk, operational errors or fraud). The Trustees undertake a review of the internal controls and processes of each of the investment managers as frequently as is appropriate.

7. Expected return on investments

- 7.1. The Trustees have regard to the relative investment return and risk that each asset class is expected to provide. The Trustees are advised by their professional advisors on these matters, who they deem to be appropriately qualified experts. However, the day-to-day selection of investments is delegated to the investment managers.
- 7.2. The Trustees recognise the need to distinguish between nominal and real returns and to make appropriate allowance for inflation when making decisions and comparisons.
- 7.3. In considering the expected return from investments, the Trustees recognise that different asset classes have different long-term expected returns and expected volatilities relative to the liabilities.
- 7.4. Having established the investment strategy, the Trustees monitor the performance of each investment manager against an agreed benchmark on a quarterly basis, or as frequently as appropriate according to market conditions and the Scheme's funding position. The Trustees meet the Scheme's investment managers as frequently as is appropriate in order to review performance.

8. Realisation of investments

- 8.1. The Trustees have delegated the responsibility for buying and selling investments to the investment managers. The Trustees have considered the risk of liquidity as referred to above.
- 8.2. Ultimately, the investments will all have to be sold when the Scheme's life comes to an end. In this situation, the Trustees are aware of the fact that the realisable value of some investments, were there to be a forced sale, might be lower than the market value shown in the Scheme accounts.

9. Financially material considerations, non-financial matters, the exercise of voting rights and engagement activities

- 9.1. The Trustees believe that environmental, social and governance factors are potentially financially material. However, these factors do not take precedence over other financial and non-financial factors, including but not limited to historical performance or fees. The Trustees may consider both financial and non-financial factors when selecting or reviewing the Scheme's investment strategy.

- 9.2. As the Scheme's investments are held in pooled funds, social, environmental and governance considerations are set by each of the investment managers, who also exercise the rights attaching to the investments in any pooled funds. Each of the Scheme's investment managers will ultimately act in the best interests of the investors to meet the stated investment objectives of the fund.
- 9.3. In selecting and reviewing their investment managers, where appropriate, the Trustees will consider investment managers' policies on engagement and how these policies have been implemented.
- 9.4. The Trustees have taken into consideration the Financial Reporting Council's UK Stewardship Code, and the investment managers all have stated corporate governance policies, which comply with these principles. The Trustees believe that good stewardship and positive engagement can lead to improved governance and better risk-adjusted investor returns. The Trustees delegate the exercise of rights (including voting rights) attached to the Scheme's investments to the investment managers.
- 9.5. The Trustees have set policies in relation to these matters, which are detailed further in Appendix 2 of this Statement.

10. Policy on arrangements with asset managers

Incentivising alignment with the Trustees' investment policies

- 10.1. Prior to appointing an investment manager, the Trustees discuss the investment manager's approach to the management of ESG and climate related risks with the Scheme's investment consultant, and how their policies are aligned with the Trustees' own investment beliefs.
- 10.2. When appointing an investment manager, in addition to considering the investment manager's investment philosophy, process and policies to establish how the manager intends to make the required investment returns, the Trustees also consider how ESG and climate risk are integrated into these. If the Trustees deem any aspect of these policies to be out of line with their own investment objectives for the part of the portfolio being considered, they will consider using another manager for the mandate.
- 10.3. The Trustees carry out a strategy review when appropriate, where they assess the continuing relevance of the strategy in the context of the Scheme's membership and their aims, beliefs and constraints. The Trustees monitor the investment managers' approach to ESG and climate related risks on an annual basis.
- 10.4. In the event that an investment manager ceases to meet the Trustees' desired aims, including the management of ESG and climate related risks, using the approach expected of them, their appointment will be terminated. Prior to terminating the appointment, the manager will be given the opportunity to correct or improve their performance and actions in order to meet the desired aims. The investment managers have been informed of this by the Trustees.
- 10.5. Investment manager ESG policies are reviewed in the context of best industry practice and feedback will be provided to the investment manager.

Incentivising assessments based on medium to long term, financial and non-financial considerations

- 10.6. The Trustees are mindful that the impact of ESG and climate change has a long-term nature. However, the Trustees recognise that the potential for change in value as a result of ESG and climate risk may occur over a much shorter term than climate change itself. The Trustees acknowledge this in their investment management arrangements.

- 10.7. When considering the management of objectives for an investment manager (including ESG and climate risk objectives), and then assessing their effectiveness and performance, the Trustees assess these over a rolling timeframe. The Trustees believe the use of rolling timeframes, typically 3 to 5 years, is consistent with ensuring the investment manager makes decisions based on an appropriate time horizon. Where a fund may have an absolute return or shorter-term target, this is generally supplementary to a longer-term performance target. In the case of assets that are actively managed, the Trustees expect this longer-term performance target to be sufficient to ensure an appropriate alignment of interests.
- 10.8. The Trustees expect investment managers to be voting and engaging on behalf of the Scheme's holdings and the Scheme monitors this activity within the Implementation Statement in the Scheme's Annual Report and Accounts. The Trustees do not expect ESG considerations to be disregarded by the investment managers in an effort to achieve any short-term targets.

Method and time horizon for assessing performance

- 10.9. The Trustees monitor the performance of their investment managers over medium to long-term periods that are consistent with the Trustees' investment aims, beliefs and constraints.
- 10.10. The Scheme invests exclusively in pooled funds. The investment managers are remunerated by the Trustees based on the assets they manage on behalf of the Trustees. As the funds grow, due to successful investment by the investment manager and/ or through market movements, they receive more and as values fall they receive less.
- 10.11. The Trustees believe that this fee structure enables the investment managers to focus on long-term performance without worrying about short term dips in performance significantly affecting their revenue.
- 10.12. The Trustees ask the Scheme's investment consultant to assess if the asset management fee is in line with the market when the manager is selected, and the appropriateness of the annual management charges are considered regularly as part of the review of the Statement of Investment Principles.

Portfolio turnover costs

- 10.13. The Trustees acknowledge that portfolio turnover costs can impact on the performance of their investments. Overall performance is assessed as part of the quarterly investment monitoring process.
- 10.14. During the investment manager appointment process, the Trustees may consider both past and anticipated portfolio turnover levels. When underperformance is identified, deviations from the expected level of turnover may be investigated with the investment manager concerned if it is felt they may have been a significant contributor to the underperformance. Assessments reflect the market conditions and peer group practices. The Trustees acknowledge that for some asset classes, such as LDI, a higher turnover of contracts such as repurchase agreements, can be beneficial to the fund from both a risk and cost perspective.

Duration of arrangement with asset manager

- 10.15. For the open-ended pooled funds in which the Scheme invests, there are no predetermined terms of agreement with the investment managers.
- 10.16. The suitability of the Scheme's asset allocation and its ongoing alignment with the Trustees' investment beliefs is assessed every three years, or when changes deem it appropriate to do so more frequently. As part of this review the ongoing appropriateness of the investment managers, and the specific funds used, is assessed.

11. Agreement

- 11.1. This Statement was agreed by the Trustees, and replaces any previous statements. Copies of this Statement and any subsequent amendments will be made available to the Employer, the members, the investment managers, the Actuary and the Scheme auditor upon request.

Agreed by the Trustees on behalf of the Staff Pension Scheme of Nottingham Building Society on 31 August 2021

Appendix 1 Note on investment policy of the Scheme in relation to the current Statement of Investment Principles dated August 2021

1. The balance between different kinds of investment

The Scheme has a strategic asset allocation as set out in the table below, which has been agreed after considering the Scheme's liability profile, funding position, expected return of the various asset classes and the need for diversification.

	Strategic allocation
Growth Portfolio	68%
LGIM Future World Global Equity Index Fund (GBP Hedged)	20%
Baillie Gifford Multi Asset Growth Fund	23%
Barings Global High Yield Credit Strategies Fund	25%
Protection Portfolio	32%
LGIM Matching Core Funds	32%
Total	100%

Rebalancing

The Trustees recognise that the asset allocation of investments in different asset classes will vary over time as a result of market movements. The Trustees seek to maintain a balance between maintaining the asset allocation in line with its benchmark and limiting the costs of rebalancing events. The Trustees will monitor the asset allocation relative to the strategic allocation and make decisions to rebalance as appropriate.

2. Choosing investments

The Trustees have appointed the following investment managers to carry out the day-to-day investment of the Scheme's invested assets:

- Baillie Gifford
- Barings
- Legal & General Investment Management ("LGIM")

The Trustees also have an AVC contract with ReAssure (previously Windsor Life) for the receipt of members' Additional Voluntary Contributions (AVCs).

The investment managers and AVC providers are authorized and regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority.

The investment benchmarks and objectives for each fund are given below:

Fund	Benchmark	Objective
LGIM Future World Global Equity Index Fund (GBP Hedged)	Solactive L&G ESG Global Markets Index (GBP Hedged)	To track the performance of the benchmark to within +/- 0.60% p.a. for two years out of three
Baillie Gifford Multi Asset Growth Fund	Bank of England Base Rate + 3.5% p.a. (net of fees), over rolling 5 years	To perform in line with the benchmark
Barings Global High Yield Credit Strategies Fund	LIBOR + 5% p.a. (gross of fees)	To perform in line with the benchmark
LGIM Matching Core Funds	Bespoke liability profile benchmark valued on both swap and gilt curves	No official outperformance target but would expect performance at least in line with the better performing of gilts and swaps over the long-term

The performance of the investment managers will be monitored quarterly and takes into account both short-term and long-term performance.

3. Investment and disinvestments

The Trustees have adopted a Liability Driven Investment (“LDI”) Portfolio, comprising of the LGIM Matching Core Funds, in order to maintain an overall hedge of approximately 100% of the Scheme’s funded liabilities’ sensitivity to changes in interest rates and inflation, as measured on the Technical Provisions basis. The value of these investments can change materially over time due to movements in long-term interest rates and market-implied inflation and will therefore deviate from the strategic allocation set out above.

The Trustees will consider how any investments or disinvestments involving the LGIM Matching Core Funds will affect the level of interest rate and inflation hedging before taking action. Therefore, through the normal course of events, cashflow management transactions will not be made using the LGIM Matching Core Funds, unless a change in the hedging level is required, or under other circumstances at the Trustees’ discretion.

The Trustees may also have a small allocation to the LGIM Sterling Liquidity Fund for the purpose of meeting collateral calls and cashflow requirements. However, the strategic aim will be for the allocation to this fund to be as low as possible, but from time to time, given prevailing market conditions and liquidity requirements, the allocation to this fund may increase. Should there not be sufficient capital available in the LGIM Sterling Liquidity Fund to meet a collateral call, the remaining balance will be disinvested from the LGIM Future World Global Equity Index Fund.

Under normal circumstances, any disinvestments for cashflow purposes should be made from the Baillie Gifford Multi Asset Growth Fund.

Any investments should be equally split between the Baillie Gifford Multi Asset Growth Fund and the Barings Global High Yield Credit Strategies Fund.

Fund	Allocation of investments
Baillie Gifford Multi Asset Growth Fund	50%
Barings Global High Yield Credit Strategies Fund	50%

Appendix 2 Financially material considerations, non-financially material considerations, stewardship, the exercise of voting rights and engagement activities

1. Financially Material Considerations

The Trustees consider that factors such as environmental, social and governance (ESG) issues (including but not limited to climate change) may be financially material for the Scheme over the length of time during which the benefits provided by the Scheme for members require to be funded to a level which would allow the benefits to be bought out with an insurer.

The Trustees have elected to invest the Scheme's assets through pooled funds. The choice of underlying funds is made by the Trustees after taking advice from their investment consultant. The Trustees, and the managers of the underlying funds, takes into account ESG factors (including climate change risks) in their decisions in relation to the selection, retention and realisation of investments.

The Trustees take those factors into account in the selection, retention and realisation of investments as follows:

Selection of investments: assess the investment managers' ESG integration credentials and capabilities, including stewardship, as a routine part of requests for information/proposals as well as through other regular reporting channels.

Retention of investments: Developing a monitoring process in order to monitor ESG considerations on an ongoing basis by regularly seeking information on the responsible investing policies and practices of the investment managers.

Realisation of investments: The Trustees will request information from investment managers about how ESG considerations are taken into account in decisions to realise investments.

The Trustees will also take those factors into account as part of their investment process to determine a strategic asset allocation, and consider them as part of ongoing reviews of the Scheme's investments.

The Trustees will continue to monitor and assess ESG factors, and risks and opportunities arising from them, as follows:-

- The Trustees will obtain regular training on ESG considerations in order to understand fully how ESG factors including climate change could impact the Scheme and its investments;
- As part of ongoing monitoring of the Scheme's investment managers, the Trustees will use any ESG ratings information available within the pensions industry or provided by its investment consultant, to assess how the Scheme's investment managers take account of ESG issues; and
- Through their investment consultant, the Trustees will request that all of the Scheme's investment managers provide information about their ESG policies, and details of how they integrate ESG into their investment processes on an annual basis.

2. Non-financially material considerations

The Trustees do not take into account the views of Scheme members and beneficiaries in relation to ethical considerations, social and environmental impact, or present and future quality of life of the members and beneficiaries of the Scheme (referred to as "non-financial matters" in the relevant Regulations) in the selection, retention and realisation of investments.

The Trustees will review their policy on whether or not to take account of non-financial matters on an annual basis.

3. The exercise of voting rights

The Trustees' policy on the exercise of rights attaching to investments, including voting rights, and in undertaking engagement activities in respect of the investments is that these rights should be exercised by the investment managers on the Trustees' behalf. In doing so, the Trustees expect that the investment managers will use their influence as major institutional investors to exercise the Trustees' rights and duties as shareholders, including where appropriate engaging with underlying investee companies to promote good corporate governance, accountability and to understand how those companies take account of ESG issues in their businesses.

The Trustees will monitor and engage with the investment managers about relevant matters (including business performance, strategy, capital structure, management of actual or potential conflicts of interest, risks, social and environmental impact and corporate governance matters), through the Scheme's investment consultant.

Investment managers will be asked to provide details of their stewardship policy and engagement activities on at least an annual basis. The Trustees will, with input from their investment consultant, monitor and review the information provided by the investment managers. Where possible and appropriate, the Trustees will engage with their investment managers for more information and ask them to confirm that their policies comply with the principles set out in the Financial Reporting Council's UK Stewardship Code.

4. Engagement activities

The Trustees acknowledge the importance of ESG and climate risk within their investment framework. When delegating investment decision making to their investment managers they provide their investment managers with a benchmark they expect the investment managers to either follow or outperform. The investment manager has discretion over where in an investee company's capital structure it invests (subject to the restrictions of the mandate), whether directly or as an asset within a pooled fund.

The Trustees are of the belief that ESG and climate risk considerations extend over the entirety of a company's corporate structure and activities, i.e. that they apply to equity, credit and property instruments or holdings. The Trustees also recognise that ESG and climate related issues are constantly evolving and along with them so too are the products available within the investment management industry to help manage these risks.

The Trustees consider it a part of their investment managers' roles to assess and monitor developments in the capital structure for each of the companies in which the managers invest on behalf of the pooled fund in which the Scheme holds units.

The Trustees also consider it part of their investment managers' roles to assess and monitor how the companies in which they are investing are managing developments in ESG related issues, and in particular climate risk, across the relevant parts of the capital structure for each of the companies in which the managers invest on behalf of the Scheme.

Should an investment manager be failing in these respects, this should be captured in the Scheme's regular performance monitoring.

The Scheme's investment managers are granted full discretion over whether or not to invest in the Principal Employer's business. Through their consultation with the Principal Employer when setting this Statement of Investment Principles, the Trustees have made the Principal Employer aware of their policy on ESG and climate related risks, how they intend to manage them and the importance that the pensions industry as a whole, and its regulators, place on them.

The Scheme's investment consultant is independent and no arm of their business provides asset management services. This, and their FCA Regulated status, makes the Trustees confident that the investment manager recommendations they make are free from conflict of interest.

The Trustees expect all investment managers to have a conflict of interest policy in relation to their engagement and ongoing operations. In doing so the Trustees believe they have managed the potential for conflicts of interest in the appointment of the investment manager and conflicts of interest between the Trustees/ investment manager and the investee companies.

In selecting and reviewing their investment managers, where appropriate, the Trustees will consider investment managers' policies on engagement and how these policies have been implemented.