

Report to the Cabinet



Report reference: **C-xxx-2020/21**

Date of meeting: **06 December
2021**

**Epping Forest
District Council**

Portfolio: Planning and Sustainability

Subject: Endorsement of Harlow and Gilston Garden Town Transport Strategy

Responsible Officer: Ione Braddick (01992 564205).

Democratic Services: Adrian Hendry (01992 564246).

Recommendations/Decisions Required:

- (1) To consider the HGGT Transport Strategy (Appendix A) together with the accompanying appendices including the high level programme (Appendix B), consultation report (Appendix C) and equality impact assessment (Appendix D);**
- (2) To agree that the HGGT Transport Strategy will be considered as a material planning consideration in connection with the preparation of masterplans, pre-application advice, assessing planning applications and any other development management purposes for sites within the Harlow and Gilston Garden Town;**
- (3) To delegate to the Planning Portfolio Holder for Planning and Sustainability in consultation with the Director of the Garden Town to make any minor text or design amendments to the HGGT Transport Strategy prior to publication should there be necessity for clarification or changes proposed by the respective decision makers of East Herts, Harlow and Epping Forest Districts and Essex and Hertfordshire Counties in order to ensure a consistent document.**
- (4) To acknowledge that the ambition, mode share objective and principles in the Transport Strategy should help shape existing and future work programmes of the Highway Authorities and the Local Planning Authorities across the Garden Town, and can provide supporting justification for funding submissions and spending commitments in relation to transport. Content will also be relevant to initiatives undertaken by Epping Forest District Council.**

Executive Summary:

This report concerns the endorsement of the Harlow and Gilston Garden Town (HGGT) Transport Strategy. The HGGT Transport Strategy has been prepared on behalf of the five HGGT Authority partners (Epping Forest, Harlow and East Herts District Councils, and Essex and Hertfordshire County Councils). The Strategy is crucial in meeting the ambitions for

sustainable movement set out within the HGGT Vision, against the backdrop of the challenges of future travel demand linked to planned growth as set out in the Council's emerging Local Plan.

Transport is now the largest contributor to UK greenhouse gas emissions (28% of domestic emissions, of which 90% is road transport), worsening the climate emergency. All five HGGT Partner Authorities have declared a Climate Emergency or committed to Climate Action, with Epping Forest District Council declaring a Climate Emergency in 2019 and recently undertaking public consultation on the Council's Climate Action Plan. This HGGT Transport Strategy supports the highest commitment across the Garden Town Authorities: to become Carbon-Neutral by 2030.

Key to this is making it easier to choose to travel sustainably, by providing reliable and high quality sustainable and active travel routes, and creating connected communities and safe, enjoyable streets that offer local facilities and travel options for everyday activities.

The Transport Strategy is intended to be embedded as a material planning consideration into the masterplanning and planning processes for the new Garden Town Communities, neighbourhoods and other developments within the Garden Town. The Strategy will also be used to secure funding from developers, central government and other bodies.

The Transport Strategy establishes a clear Mode Share Objective:

- **50% of all trips** starting and/or ending in the existing settlement area of Harlow Town should be by active and sustainable travel modes, and;
- **60% of all trips** starting and/or ending in the new Garden Communities of Harlow & Gilston Garden Town should be by active and sustainable travel modes

The Transport Strategy also includes a set of Principles which aligns with the growth strategies (including the planned delivery of 23,000 homes within the Garden Town) within the respective Local Plans of the HGGT partner authorities. The Strategy sets out how this planned growth can be achieved through modal shift towards sustainable and active travel and details a number of measures to achieve this modal shift and the ambitious targets proposed for sustainable travel.

This report sets out how the HGGT Transport Strategy has evolved based on latest national transport strategy documents, to have updated Objectives, Principles and Actions, and the key changes which have taken place due to the extensive public consultation that has been undertaken. The first draft of the Transport Strategy was reviewed by EFDC Cabinet Members in March 2019, with further engagement from March 2020 - September 2021 with partner members and portfolio-holders alongside targeted additional public engagement, to produce the final Strategy. Further detail of the consultation can be found in the Consultation Report (Appendix C).

Reasons for Proposed Decision:

To ensure that the HGGT Transport Strategy is afforded suitable planning weight through endorsement as a material consideration in the planning process. This will ensure that development proposals across the Garden Town contribute to the Council's and HGGT's sustainable mobility ambitions, and that clear parameters are established for future pre-application advice, preparation of masterplans, assessing planning applications and any other development management purposes.

Other Options for Action:

Not to agree the HGGT Transport Strategy or endorse the HGGT Transport Strategy as a material consideration in the planning process, which would mean that there would be no guidance to support the delivery of development proposals and achieve the objectives set out in the HGGT Vision and Council's emerging Local Plan.

Report:

1. The HGGT Transport Strategy can be found at Appendix A. It was developed to deliver the HGGT Vision in respect of the key principles for Healthy Growth through a focus on Sustainable Movement to support the scale of ambitious housing and economic growth set out in the Local Plans.
2. This investment in travel choice for residents, workers and visitors, to achieve the Mode Share Objective, reduces the impact on the existing public highway from all new developments and from the existing town, preserving capacity in the network. This allows the new developments to be delivered without negatively impacting on the ability of the public highway to operate safely and acceptably, whilst also contributing positively to health, wellbeing and environmental quality across the Garden Town.
3. The Transport Strategy is consistent with the principles and indicators within the HGGT Vision, HGGT Sustainability Guidance & Checklist and the Local Planning Authorities adopted and emerging Local Plan policies. The Strategy is also consistent with the principles set out in the Town and Country Planning Association Garden Community guidance including the ambitious Modal Shift Objective at the core of the Transport Strategy (detailed below).
4. Since the publication of the draft Strategy the Government has released three important national transport strategy documents:
 - Gear Change – A bold policy for walking and cycling – July 2020
 - Bus Back Better – National Bus Strategy for England – March 2021
 - Decarbonising Transport - A better greener Britain – July 2021
5. The HGGT Transport Strategy aligns with these documents including setting an ambitious mode share target; development of a Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan to invest in the active travel network; the development of the Sustainable Transport Corridors to enhance public transport operation; development of Enhanced Bus Partnerships in response to 'Bus Back Better' and developing strategies to introduce electric vehicle charging.
6. The Transport Strategy is intended to be used by applicants (for planning permission on sites located in the Garden Town) and partner Authorities when preparing and discussing masterplans, pre-application proposals, determining planning applications, considering Section 106 obligations and discharging conditions attached to planning permissions. This will ensure a consistent and integrated consideration of the key sustainable transport principles, objectives and priorities at the early stages of schemes and masterplans across the Garden Town.
7. A high level programme is set out in Appendix B. Further work will need to be undertaken to refine this programme as schemes come forward for delivery and funding becomes available. This programme will be greatly informed by the HGGT

Infrastructure Delivery Plan which will be regularly reviewed.

THE OBJECTIVES, PRINCIPLES AND ACTIONS

8. The HGGT Transport Strategy proposes one overarching Mode Share Objective, three Principles and is supported by five key actions. These are set out below:
9. The Objective:
 - Mode Share Objective – 50% of all trips starting and/or ending in the existing settlement area of Harlow Town should be by active and sustainable travel modes and 60% of all trips starting and/or ending in the new Garden Communities of Harlow & Gilston Garden Town should be by active and sustainable travel modes.
10. The Principles:
 - Principle 1 – User hierarchy: Decisions should be shaped by following the user hierarchy which gives priority to reducing unnecessary travel, walking, cycling and public transport.
 - Principle 2 – A culture of active and sustainable travel: The Garden Town should be an environment where active and sustainable travel is valued, prioritised, and supported to ensure that the associated social, environmental, wellbeing and economic benefits are available to everyone.
 - Principle 3 – Accessibility and Inclusion: Infrastructure should be designed for everyone and with consideration of those with the greatest need first. Everyone should have the opportunity to choose more sustainable and active modes of travel.
11. The Actions:
 - Action 1: Enabling Choice ...means creating connected communities that offer local facilities and travel options for everyday activities.
 - Action 2: Streets for People ...means making our streets and neighbourhoods places that are safe, sociable and enjoyable – for everyone – by creating attractive places that people want to walk and cycle in.
 - Action 3: Quality Public Transport ...means connecting people to the places they want to go, providing independence and mobility to those who need it most, while reducing air pollution and congestion. The development and delivery of the Sustainable Transport Corridor network will facilitate this.
 - Action 4: A Network that Works ...means providing reliable, high-quality alternatives to private vehicles.
 - Action 5: Maximising Opportunities ... means exploring and introducing new and innovative transport technologies as they develop.
12. Achieving the Mode Share Objective will require a generational change. It also has some interdependencies with progression of other policies and infrastructure at national and local levels, including the availability of funding. It is therefore recognised that it will be an incremental process but one that will require an extensive range of measures from the outset in the new Garden Communities and as soon as possible

within the existing town. Appendix B presents a high level programme showing the mix of projects anticipated including discrete one-off proposals such as the Sustainable Transport Corridor network and rolling programmes of behaviour change incentives.

13. Funding is required to develop schemes and initiatives through to delivery. Funding will be sought from a variety of sources such as developer contributions and Government grants e.g. the Housing Investment Grant (HIG), the Active Travel Fund, Levelling Up Fund, Capacity and Capability funding. Partners have already been successful in securing HIG funding, and the Towns fund with submissions recently made for Levelling Up and Active Travel Funding pending.
14. Securing the HIG grant enables the early delivery of essential transport infrastructure and sustainable transport corridors which have the potential to unlock planned growth in the Garden Town. The mechanisms associated with the HIG and Section 106 obligations associated with strategic schemes coming forward in the Garden Town area will enable the creation of the Rolling Investment Fund (RIF). The initial RIF is estimated to amount to circa £129m (subject to index linking) comprised of developer contributions towards the STCs, other potential infrastructure, initiatives, measures and mitigations associated with HGGT developments. In this way, all five partners (comprising three local planning authorities and two local highway authorities) have a vested interest in effective management of developer contributions comprised in the RIF and collective decision-making protocols and governance will be required to determine prioritisation of funding into the future HGGT transport infrastructure, projects, initiatives or measures as envisaged by this Transport Strategy.
15. The Strategy acknowledges that there will be continued use of private motor vehicle (i.e. 50% for the existing town and 40% for new Garden Communities, based on the Mode Share Objective) but reliance on high levels of private car use is not sustainable in the context of the levels of growth set out in the Local Plans. Continuing to do so will result in increased congestion, which is likely to impede planned growth and will have negative impacts on quality of life in the Garden Town, especially to deliver quality places to live and work.
16. The Strategy does not advocate increasing highway capacity as the default 'predict and provide' response, taking instead a 'vision and validate' response – developing schemes that align with the HGGT Vision rather than continued provision of extra road capacity. Through this approach the Strategy promotes redesigning the transport network and supporting residents and businesses to bring about a modal shift towards active, sustainable and inclusive modes of travel.

THE SUSTAINABLE TRANSPORT CORRIDOR (STC) NETWORK

17. A key element of the Garden Town Vision and a critical enabling factor of planned growth is the ambition for new and existing residents to adopt active and sustainable travel behaviours.
18. To meet this ambition and support the planned growth, the Strategy includes the development of a network of sustainable transport corridors (STCs) (p.37) and a rapid bus transport system (a high-quality, frequent and fast bus service) which will help new and existing residents travel quickly and sustainably in and around the Garden Town. The sustainable transport corridors will also improve the facilities for those walking and cycling.
19. Design work continues on the network with the North to Centre section being the most

advanced and to be funded by HIG grant. It is anticipated that this will be consulted on in the near future.

20. Enhanced Bus Partnership and Operation: An essential part of the STCs is the delivery and management of the public transport services and potentially other initiatives for the benefit of the customer. The Government's "Bus Back Better" strategy proposed a number of options for Local Highways Authorities to adopt to improve public transport. Both Essex and Hertfordshire County Councils have decided to introduce Enhanced Bus Partnerships, Hertfordshire building upon its existing quality partnership. Through an Enhanced Partnership, services can be controlled and regulated including quality, level of service, ticketing and branding for a future HGGT service. Further work is required on the scope and extent of the enhanced partnerships covering the HGGT area and consultation will be required with users and operators at the relevant time.

CONSULTATION

21. The draft Transport Strategy was subject to public consultation in early 2020 (including exhibitions, Member briefings, village halls and workshops with key stakeholders) just before the Covid-19 lockdown and results were presented to the Board in June 2020. Further consultation was requested to secure input from unrepresented groups – specifically young people, businesses and local organisations – and to increase the overall consultation response. A second round of consultation was therefore conducted over 4 weeks in late 2020. This consultation focused on young people, businesses, charities and internal Officers through a series of workshops.
22. In total there were 154 responses to the survey, over 150 workshop attendees and over 900 comments were received from all engagement undertaken. This was enhanced through a more effective use of social media which was significantly developed following the first round. A HGGT Member Briefing was also held on 20 September 2021. Further detail on the consultation process and results can be found in Appendix C.
23. As a result of both rounds of consultation and the large amount of feedback received there have been several changes to the content and design of the Strategy, with further detail in Appendix C.
24. The updated Strategy has now been simplified to incorporate a single Mode Share Objective with three principles which incorporate the former Objectives 2 (The user hierarchy) and 3 (A culture of active and sustainable travel) from the first draft Strategy. In addition, there is a further principle around accessibility and inclusion which was absent from the earlier draft versions. The number of Actions has been condensed from 8 to 5 to avoid repetition and consolidate information.
25. Significant design changes have been made to the formatting of the Strategy to improve engagement, interactivity and accessibility for use online.
26. Greater clarity has been provided in the Strategy on the future role of Zero Emission Vehicles (ZEVs) in the Garden Town after requests from Authority Partner Members. The market share of ZEVs is likely to increase substantially given the ban on sale of new petrol and diesel cars by 2030.
27. ZEVs are a powerful tool in the transition to a sustainable transport network and there is a clear need for additional infrastructure to support uptake. ZEVs will be particularly

important to ensure that the 50% (existing town) and 40% (new Garden Communities) of journeys in the Garden Town which do not utilise active and sustainable modes have a reduced impact on the environment and society.

28. However, ZEVs are not considered sustainable within the HGGT active and sustainable transport modes definition. There are several reasons for this, although within the context of the Garden Town there are two primary concerns:
29. It is essential that Developers deliver on the HGGT Principles for healthy growth and provide the financial support for active and sustainable transport services and infrastructure. Including ZEVs in the Mode Share Objective would greatly increase the risk that the financial support needed for meaningful modal shift is not provided due to overreliance on ZEVs.
30. Including ZEVs as a sustainable transport mode will place a significant additional burden on highway capacity that does not align with the growth agenda supported by the HGGT Partner Councils. ZEVs do not address the issues of congestion, space and severance that can only be achieved through modal shift

EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT (EQIA)

31. An EQIA has been undertaken and is attached to this report (Appendix D). The consultation highlighted the need to include a principle on accessibility and inclusion. This change and others were taken into consideration in the final Transport Strategy now being presented and as detailed in the EQIA assessment. The design and format of the Strategy has been reviewed against Shawtrust accreditation to ensure legibility and accessibility for online viewing.

HOW THE HGGT TRANSPORT STRATEGY WILL BE USED

32. The Transport Strategy will be embedded as a material planning consideration into the masterplanning and planning processes for the new Garden Town communities, neighbourhoods and developments through ongoing work with the relevant partner Councils, site developers and planning applicants to ensure that the ambitious sustainable mode share objective, as set out, is being achieved.
33. The Transport Strategy will provide a base of evidence and best practice which will be used to inform the planning and design processes, behaviour change programmes, further evidence commissions, business plans, guidance notes etc. The evidence base that underpins the Transport Strategy will continue to evolve and be taken into consideration when developing transport schemes.
34. A monitoring framework will be established to ensure alignment with this Strategy. This Framework will be based on the recommendations from the HGGT Monitoring Framework Technical Note. Policies and schemes will also be monitored internally through the HGGT Board approval and oversight process. The Transport Strategy will be reviewed every three years to ensure evidence and measures are still relevant.

NEXT STEPS

35. There are a number of next steps for the HGGT Transport Strategy following endorsement by the HGGT partner District Cabinets/Executives and County Councils and publication of the Strategy (early 2022):

- Ensure the Strategy is hosted on the HGGT Website and Partner District Council websites as a key material planning consideration in assessing planning applications.
- Ensure the Strategy guides the masterplanning decisions for, or impacting upon, the HGGT;
- Secure Public Sector funding for infrastructure and measures identified in the programme;
- Maximise developer funding/contributions, without which the Strategy cannot be delivered;
- Identification of resources to develop a monitoring and evaluation strategy, building on the Strategy's target.
- Develop a detailed delivery plan to produce a funded and prioritised programme as part of the HGGT annual business planning for delivery of actions:
 - a. Consideration of details such as timescales, funding sources, delivery options, locations and priorities.
 - b. Alignment of principles, particularly the transport hierarchy, and speed of achieving the 50 and 60% modal share target.

Resource Implications

The work to support the HGGT Transport Strategy at masterplanning and planning application stage, to be viewed alongside the emerging Local Plan policies, is covered by the resource within the Implementation team. The Strategy will require resource to plan, deliver and monitor the infrastructure schemes, and to deliver behaviour change measures. These will be primarily undertaken by Local Highways Authorities with support from HGGT. However further actions to deliver active travel behaviour change within local communities will require resource from the relevant authority partner and their Sustainable Travel / Community Engagement teams, in partnership with Local Highway Authorities and the HGGT team. The financial contributions – if any – required from Epping Forest District Council are currently unknown. Detailed proposals, including detailed financial implications, will be developed in the context of the Council's financial position and reported in due course

Safer, Cleaner and Greener Implications:

The delivery of the HGGT Transport Strategy will help to address how the planned growth can be achieved, through modal shift towards sustainable and active travel. The Strategy seeks to take forward emerging Local Plan policies designed to promote the notion of encouraging and enabling active and sustainable travel choices, and through doing so improving health, wellbeing, air quality, placeshaping, economic and social mobility. This will contribute to safer, cleaner, greener objectives by planning for sustainable development.

Consultation Undertaken:

Informal engagement was undertaken throughout the production of the draft HGGT Transport Strategy with partner officers, community groups and the HGGT Board. The draft HGGT

Transport Strategy was subject to a 6-week public consultation in January 2020 (including exhibitions, Member briefings, village halls and workshops with key stakeholders). This took place just before the first Covid-19 lockdown and results were presented to the HGGT of this consultation Board in June 2020. Further consultation was requested to secure input from unrepresented groups – specifically young people, businesses and local organisations – and to increase the overall consultation response. A second round of consultation was therefore conducted over 4 weeks in late 2020. This consultation focused on young people, businesses, charities and internal Officers through a series of workshops. Further detail on the consultation process and results can be found in Appendix C.

Background Papers:

- Cabinet Report C-036-2018/19– Harlow and Gilston Garden Town Transport Strategy
07 March 2019

Risk Management:

The use of these documents as material planning considerations will support the Council's objectives of achieving high quality and sustainable design in the district and reduce the risk of poor quality development.