

Report to Overview and Scrutiny Committee



SCRUTINY

Date of meeting: 18 November 2021

Portfolio: Planning and Sustainability (Cllr Nigel Bedford)



Subject: Endorsement of the HGGT Transport Strategy

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Recommendations/Decisions Required:

Overview and Scrutiny Committee is requested to consider the report for endorsement of the Harlow and Gilston Garden Town Transport Strategy (report and appendices attached as Appendix A, B, C, D, E) and make any comments that they wish Cabinet to reflect upon when they receive this report on 06 December 2021.

Report:

1. Harlow and Gilston was designated as a Garden Town by the Ministry for Homes, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) in January 2017 and will comprise new and existing communities in and around Harlow.
2. Set in attractive countryside, with transformative investment in transport and community infrastructure, new neighbourhoods to the east, west and south and new villages to the north (collectively referred to as the new Garden Communities) will be established and integrated with the existing Harlow town.
3. The Harlow and Gilston Garden Town (HGGT) Partnership describes the cross boundary joint working arrangements between East Herts District Council (EHDC), Epping Forest District Council (EFDC) and Harlow District Council (HDC) working together with Essex County Council (ECC) and Hertfordshire County Council (HCC) to ensure plans for the Garden Town deliver on their agreed HGGT Vision.
4. The report (Appendix A) concerns the endorsement of the HGGT Transport Strategy. The Transport Strategy has been prepared on behalf of the HGGT Partnership. 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.
5. 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.
6. 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.

7. 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.
8. 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
9. The Transport Strategy also includes a set of Principles which aligns with the growth strategies (including the 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 Actions to achieve this modal shift and the ambitious targets proposed for sustainable travel.
10. The report also 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 and partner member engagement 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 Transport Strategy. Further detail of the consultation can be found in the Consultation Report (Appendix D).

Reason for 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.

Options considered and rejected:

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.

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.

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

Legal and Governance Implications:

Safer, Cleaner, 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.

Background Papers:

- Cabinet Report C-036-2018/19– Harlow and Gilston Garden Town Transport Strategy 07 March 2019
- Appendix A: Report to 06 Dec Cabinet: Endorsement of HGGT Transport Strategy
- Appendix B: HGGT Transport Strategy
- Appendix C: High Level Programme
- Appendix D: Consultation Report
- Appendix E: Equalities Impact Assessment
- Appendix F: Report for HGGT Board on HGGT Transport Strategy