

# ***Report to the Council***

**Committee: Cabinet**

**Date: 11 October 2022**

**Subject: Place Portfolio**

**Portfolio Holder: Councillor Nigel Bedford**

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**Recommending:**

**That the report of the Place Portfolio Holder be noted.**

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## **1. Local Plan progress update**

The Council was notified 06 May 2022 that a new Planning Inspector, Jonathan Bore MRTPI, has been appointed to complete the District's Plan Examination.

As updated previously, the Plan Inspector outlined in his correspondence of 16 June 2022 that changes are required to the text of the submitted Local Plan and the Main Modifications (published and consulted upon in 2021) in order to meet the tests of soundness as set out in the National Planning Policy Framework.

Officers have worked hard over the last couple of months to respond to and satisfy each of the Inspector's Actions and are working to refine an updated Schedule of Main Modifications for consultation. This Inspector has responded quickly when contacted. Recognising the complexity of matters addressed, the response to the Inspector's Actions will be published alongside the revised further Main Modifications at the launch of the consultation period. This approach is consistent with that undertaken for Inspector Phillips' post hearing Actions and the Main Modifications Schedule consulted upon in 2021. Timescales for consultation are not yet confirmed, but it will be no longer than the statutory 6 weeks. Officers are working to deliver the consultation as soon as possible in the coming weeks to move towards the conclusion of the Examination and the final adoption of the Plan.

## **2 Neighbourhood Planning**

Neighbourhood Planning gives communities direct power to develop a shared vision for their neighbourhood and deliver the sustainable development they need. Local Planning Authorities are required to facilitate Neighbourhood Planning and constructively engage with communities throughout the process.

The Ongar Neighbourhood Plan was considered at Cabinet on 18 July 2022 with agreement sought that the draft Plan, with proposed amendments from the Inspector, meets the basic conditions and for it to therefore progress to a local referendum. That referendum was held on Thursday 8 September 2022 to decide whether local electors want Epping Forest District Council to use the Neighbourhood Plan for Ongar to help it decide planning applications in the neighbourhood area. The outcome was in favour of the Neighbourhood Plan.

### **3 Harlow and Gilston Garden Town (HGGT)**

The HGGT aims to coordinate and enable delivery of 16,000 homes by 2033, along with associated infrastructure, delivering the Garden Town Vision, principles and guidance that has been agreed by the 5 partner councils. 3,900 of these homes are allocated within Epping Forest District, making up over a third of the District's allocated housing.

The key priorities for the Garden Town for 2022 are:

- Delivering the Garden Town Vision of quality, beautiful and sustainable places
- Enabling the Infrastructure Foundations for Growth
- Maximising and Accelerating Delivery with a focus on outcomes by 2025
- Ensuring our Governance is Fit for the Future

EFDC officers continue to liaise with key stakeholders across the five Harlow and Gilston Garden Town (HGGT) authorities and relevant site promoters. This is undertaken in the context of wider Garden Town activities. Key updates in terms of the Garden Town are:

- Work has progressed on the Latton Priory Strategic Masterplan (one of the strategic sites within the Garden Town and within Epping Forest District) by the applicant and design team, in discussion with the Council's Implementation Team and HGGT partners. The strategic masterplan is expected to be reviewed by EFDC Cabinet in November, for approval for public consultation. Consultation is expected to take place in November- December.
- The five Council partners have now all, through their formal processes, agreed 'in principle' to explore the creation of a Harlow and Gilston Garden Town Joint Committee, consisting of representation by all five partner Councils. A Delegations Framework and further work on the Joint Committee is currently in progress in draft.
- The Garden Town's Your Quality of Life consultation, funded by DLUHC and asking people about what they like, dislike, value and need, was open from 15<sup>th</sup> July to 14<sup>th</sup> October. Analysis and consultation data insights in terms of social value and quality of life across the Garden Town are currently being progressed. There were over 4000 visits to the website, with 650+ responses. Findings and insights from this social value data will be fed into masterplanning & design, stewardship approaches, policy & guidance and engagement practice across the Garden Town.
- The Garden Town team is currently progressing a number of projects, including (bit not limited to) the draft HGGT Green Infrastructure Framework, draft HGGT Stewardship Guidance & Charter, updated HGGT Infrastructure Delivery Plan, East of Harlow Masterplanning Principles, and the Homes England funded STC Connector Route Study and London Road EZ/ Newhall Mobility Hub Design.

### **4. Sustainable Transport**

#### *DaRT87 Demand Responsive Transport*

Continued difficult trading conditions, with major changes in travel patterns delaying any return to pre-Covid patterns (especially no mass return to five-days per week commuting). New Flexiroute passenger App ought to streamline registration and booking process and a new £2 flat fare per journey should also stimulate some demand.

#### *Public EV charging*

Instavolt chargers at Oakwood Hill East was launched in March '22. There has been encouraging usage with sessions doubling in first three full months and a 50% increase compared with equivalent pre-Covid months on car park revenues. Further chargers in Basons Lane car park, Ongar (an EV charging 'not-spot') and Debden likely this year or early 2023.

Housing have a pilot scheme in planning for 2023 to deliver chargers in estates/replacing lockup garages. Chargers in Epping multi-storey car park are coming next year, plus private sector chargers are imminent in Buckhurst Hill (Waitrose), Epping (Tesco) plus some BP and Shell service stations, so the District's EV charging profile is looking better.

Market conditions, especially end user price increases on charging, are being watched carefully in case they start to depress EV uptake. Key high local mileage groups like licensed minicabs and SMEs are still very cautious though about switching to EV – cab fare tariff review is needed as a November '21 survey said that affordability of initial cost is a major problem for the trade, despite the ongoing low fuel and maintenance costs being attractive to them.

#### *UKSP Funded options*

LC-WIP for Waltham Abbey will enhance Ninefields estate regeneration and other wellbeing/employment initiatives locally. 24/25 funding includes £40k for Sustainable Transport initiatives. Rural England Prosperity Fund options being researched include EV charging and/or energy generation/savings for village halls and parish council sites.