

Report to the Council

Committee: Cabinet
Date: 28 February 2023
Subject: Place Portfolio
Portfolio Holder: Councillor Nigel Bedford

Recommending:

That the report of the Place Portfolio Holder be noted.

1. Local Plan progress update

The Council, in conjunction with the Plan Inspector, has finalised the proposed further Main Modifications that it considers are required to the Local Plan in order to meet the tests of soundness. Consultation on the further Main Modifications commenced on 28 October 2022 and concluded on 09 December.

We collated and shared all representations with the Planning Inspector on 16 December and he has considered them. We await confirmation that the Local Plan is 'sound' and receipt of a written report outlining his final recommendations. Providing he determines it 'sound', the Plan can be formally adopted by the Council as soon as possible.

North Weald Airfield Strategic Masterplan

The formal consultation on the draft North Weald Airfield Strategic Masterplan ('the Strategic Masterplan') finished on the 6th February 2022. This was the second stage of public consultation undertaken and concludes the public engagement part of the process to inform the preparation of the Strategic Masterplan. Since February 2022 the Strategic Masterplan has been subject to extensive review and scrutiny by both the professional team engaged in the drafting of the Strategic Masterplan, and the Council, as Local Planning Authority, to ensure the Strategic Masterplan has incorporated, where necessary and appropriate, the consultation responses. Following this review, the Final Masterplan will be presented to Cabinet as soon as possible to be formally endorsed by the Council.

Portfolio Holder Action Group

The most recent meeting took place on 23 January 2023, with Member representatives in attendance from EFDC and ECC as well as The Corporation of London and City of London. An update was given on the planned London Ultra Low Emission Zone (LULEZ) following the announcement of the decision to extend it next August up to EFDC's boundary from London. We have found out that a Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) was undertaken for the scheme in direct response to the Council's request. The HRA was supported by mapping which captures the analysis undertaken by TfL's consultants. The HRA and associated mapping shows that the LULEZ would have a beneficial effect on the Epping Forest SAC in terms of reductions of NO_x and Nitrogen Deposition.

It was also reported that in respect of the Interim Air Pollution Mitigation Strategy (APMS), once the Local Plan is adopted, the Council intends to update the APMS where necessary

and appropriate. In particular it is proposed to bring forward the timescales for the undertaking of on-site air quality monitoring and for the collection of traffic data to understand the current age and fuel type of vehicles using roads through the Epping Forest SAC. This responds to previous comments made by Natural England, the Conservators of Epping Forest and Essex County Council. As this proposed change would mean that the Council would aim to commence in May/June 2023 the Council has started the groundwork in order to commence the procurement process. Initial contact has been made with officers at the Conservators of Epping Forest and further liaison will be undertaken in relation to the finalisation of the Brief. It is intended to largely replicate the approach taken for the 2018/19 monitoring to ensure that the results can be compared. The approach undertaken for the 2018/19 monitoring was developed with a significant amount of input from the Conservators of Epping Forest.

It was also reported that The London Borough of Waltham Forest's (LBWF) emerging Local Plan is currently at Examination. The Local Plan Inspector requested that further evidence be submitted on a number of matters, including in relation to air quality impacts on the Epping Forest SAC. An updated air quality assessment was undertaken by the LBWF and published in September 2022. The assessment indicated that, as a result of the LBWF approach to car parking provision (i.e. that developments should be car free), there would be a net reduction in traffic using roads passing through the Epping Forest SAC within Epping Forest District by the end of the Plan period. This is because the sites proposed for allocation in the LBWF's emerging Local Plan are primarily for redevelopment schemes on brownfield sites which currently contain a quantum of parking. The report concludes that there would be no adverse effect on the Epping Forest SAC in terms of air quality arising from the implementation of the LBWF's Local Plan.

2. 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.

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 on the Governance structure for the Garden Town has been progressed. The five HGGT 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 from each of the 5 Council partners. It has also been agreed in principle that the Host Authority for the Joint Committee and Accountable Body for the constituted HGGT partnership would be Essex County Council. A draft Inter Authority Agreement (IAA) is being progressed, and once agreed, the 5 Council Governance Framework and Joint Committee model would then require adoption through the formal decision-making processes of each of the 5 partner Councils with a view to full Joint Committee implementation during the municipal year 2023/24.
- The draft Latton Priory Strategic Masterplan Framework, a masterplan area which is within Epping Forest District and the Garden Town, has undergone public consultation in November – January 2023. Comments are being collated and reviewed by the applicant team (CEG/ Hallam Land) in order to update the strategic

masterplan and document contents. Endorsement of the Strategic Masterplan Framework is expected in summer 2023.

- The Latton Priory Design Code is being undertaken in-house by the EFDC Implementation Team, funded as part of the DLUHC Pathfinders Programme. Design workshops will be undertaken in Feb- March 2023, with local children and young people, engaging through Epping Forest and Harlow schools, community groups, youth services and Epping Forest & Harlow Youth Councils. The workshops will focus on specific design elements such as types of streets or open spaces. It is intended that workshops are interactive and collaborative to consider designs of places and spaces together.
- Following large-scale public engagement by HGGT on quality of life and wellbeing across the Garden Town, the Your Quality of Life Community Feedback Report has been published online in January 2023. Over 1000 contributions were received as part of the engagement, with insights and analysis of these noted in the report. This includes focus on value of green spaces, sense of control and belonging, and desire for social and arts facilities particularly for the younger generation. The Your Quality of Life Reflections and Recommendations report is due to be published in February 2023, once agreed by the HGGT Board. This includes recommendations from the Quality of Life Foundation based on the insights from the consultation, around engaging and empowering local communities, and understanding key priorities of the communities. These will shape Garden Town action plans, strategies and projects going forwards.
- HGGT engaged local residents on the HGGT Travel Survey in November – December 2022, gathering understanding on 667 household's daily travel. Further engagement with local businesses and at retail and leisure locations within the Garden Town is planned for March 2023, in order to holistically understand how people move around and across the Garden Town area.
- The HGGT Green Infrastructure (GI) Framework was agreed by the HGGT Board in February as a technical evidence document. It sets out a common understanding of the value of, and vision for, a cohesive network of GI assets across the Garden Town. It is intended to help ensure development meets the GI principles within the HGGT Vision. It will provide a 'one-stop-shop' for officers across the Garden Town and developers to review policy expectations for GI across the five Council partners.

3. Sustainable Transport

DaRT87 Demand Responsive Transport

Flexiroute Passenger app was launched 8/12/22 alongside new £2 flat fare. This has been recently promoted through press release, social media and posters hosted by some local councils (Epping, Theydon Bois, Epping Upland) plus Epping and Harlow libraries. Recovery from pandemic aftermath remains very difficult for the bus industry, hence the national £2 fare promotion.

ECC confirms bus patronage is still depressed due to lack of 'traditional' 5 day per week commuting and concessionary passholder caution about public transport. EFCT passenger number is still below 50% of pre-pandemic across all usage types. Around 400 individual passenger trips have been made between April-Dec 2022 on EFCT's DaRT service.

EV Adoption and Public Charging

- EFDC area now has the largest number of BEV (Battery-only) vehicles on the roads of any Essex council at 1,440 (Q3/22)
- At December 2022, UK BEV sales outnumbered new petrol car sales for the first time (possibly skewed by Tesla's price-cut tactics, but still noteworthy)
- Total ULEV (BEV/PHEV/REX/hydrogen) vehicles is estimated at just under 3% of all local vehicles at Q3/22, versus a target of 10% by end 2025 in the Interim Air Pollution Mitigation Strategy, which is encouraging.
- However, regionally very poor levels of provision of public chargers by private as well as public sector risk creating a ceiling on adoption of EV and reducing confidence among key potential adopters
- The two Instavolt ultra-rapid chargers at Oakwood Hill East Car Park have predictably been very heavily used since March '22 and are resulting in an estimated 50% increase in parking revenues versus pre-pandemic period plus site rental income – four more concessionary contract Instavolt ultra-rapid and fast chargers are to be launched soon at Banson's Lane car park in Ongar.
- Creation of a viable EV charging policy is underway for Housing following multiple tenant requests including Motability scheme members with EVs
- There are a number of EV charging plans under EFDC's control including Housing to deliver EV chargers as part of the Ninefields regeneration; in selected new Council builds; and a lockup garage replacement pilot.

Active Travel

ECC's refreshed cycling strategy (draft) contains very little for EFDC area. Only those areas with a completed Local Cycling & Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP) are scheduled for infrastructure improvements by 2030. Otherwise, the strategy is strong on behaviour change campaigns and targets.

Bus

In addition to promoting the national £2 fare scheme, ECC has issued a draft Bus Services Improvement Plan (BSIP) for each District, a local Bus Network Review and preparations for an 'Enhanced Partnership' with bus operators in line with the Government's Bus Services Act 2017.