

## **Harlow and Gilston Garden Town Board**

### **Garden Town Vision and Design Guide**

**12<sup>th</sup> November 2018**

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#### **The Board is asked:**

- a) To note this report
- b) To agree the Vision and Design Guide documents appended, as material planning considerations for the preparation of masterplans, the preparation of the Gilston Area Charter, pre-application advice, assessing planning applications and any other development management purposes.
- c) To recommend that officers for the three Garden Town local planning authorities use this report to take the Vision and Design Guide documents to a meeting of the Harlow Cabinet on 6 December 2018 and Council on 18 December 2018; East Herts Executive Council on 11 December 2018 and Full Council on 19 December 2018; and Epping Forest District Council Cabinet Committee on 10 December 2018 for endorsement as material planning considerations as set out in b) above.

#### **Report**

- 2.1 Allies and Morrison were commissioned to support the Councils in developing a Vision and design principles for the Harlow and Gilston Garden Town in June 2017. The brief required the development of a compelling vision and set of high-level principles for the Garden Town showing how new growth will complement and enhance its location and contribute to the regeneration of Harlow Town Centre as a key regional centre in order to seize this once in a generation opportunity.
- 2.2 The aim of the Vision was to develop a strategic narrative to:
  - Identify the potential of the Harlow and Gilston Garden Town;
  - Illustrate the economic, environmental, social and cultural connections of the Garden Town;
  - Consider the Garden Town's unique growth potential and what barriers may exist to that potential which the Garden Town must seek to address;
  - Consider opportunities for enhancing green infrastructure and creating integrated, inclusive, healthy communities;
  - Consider the economic and employment role of potential new growth; and
  - Consider delivering a step-change in sustainable transport.

- 2.3 The design element of the work required the development of a set of principles that establish clear parameters for future masterplanning and consideration of planning applications across the Garden Town that will ensure a consistent high-quality approach to growth.
- 2.4 From the outset of the project it was expected that the vision and design principles would be informed by ongoing stakeholder engagement. As such a number of workshops were held between September and December 2017, and a workshop with the Garden Town Member Board was held in February 2018. These workshops helped inform the emerging vision and design principles and in May 2018 a draft version of the Vision was considered by the Harlow and Gilston Garden Town Quality Review Panel in May 2018.
- 2.5 The Quality Review Panel provides impartial and objective advice from a range of experienced practitioners. The Panel commended the draft Vision as setting a positive tone, with high aspirations underpinned by a depth of thinking, but emphasised the importance of giving it formal weight in the planning process, stating that this will be fundamental to its successful implementation.
- 2.6 The Panel also emphasised the importance of celebrating what is already special about Harlow and the local area, stating that the document would further benefit from greater emphasis around the core message of the Garden Town as a landscape-led network of integrated neighbourhoods and villages. The Panel suggested other aspects of the Vision that could be further refined including around: the character and quality of the centres, including Harlow Town Centre; village centre hierarchy, self-sufficiency and identity; employment clusters and innovation; fostering change through early small-scale interventions; and sustainable transport, including connections between the Gilston Area and Harlow Town Centre.
- 2.7 The Panel supported the proposed approach of developing key principles and indicators around the four key themes of: Placemaking and Homes; Landscape and Green infrastructure; Sustainable Movement; and Economy and Regeneration.
- 2.8 A copy of the Quality Review Panel’s full report is attached for information at **Appendix ‘D’** and the comments are addressed in more detail later in this report.
- 2.9 Following the Quality Review Panel, the Garden Town Member Board agreed that consultation should be undertaken on the Vision including the design principles.
- 2.10 Consultation was undertaken during the first two weeks of July 2018 and included:
- A two-week static exhibition (2 July – 13 July) in the Harlow Civic Centre reception and one staffed evening drop-in event in the Water Gardens (9 July)

- A two-week static exhibition (2 July – 13 July) at Epping Forest District Council Civic Offices and one staffed evening drop-in event (5 July)
- One staffed evening drop in event at Gilston and Eastwick Village Hall (12 July)
- Consultation materials and feedback forms were available online for 4 weeks on all three Council's websites.

The draft Vision and design principles were also shared with the site promoters of the strategic sites in the Garden Town at one-to-one meetings held in June/July 2018.

- 2.11 A joint press release was issued and used to advertise the events, through each of the Councils websites, social media and print. All exhibition material was also published on the Councils respective websites and a short questionnaire was produced and made available both in hard-copy and on-line.
- 2.12 A total of 97 visitors were recorded as attending the staffed public exhibitions; no count was made in relation to the static exhibitions. In total 58 respondents provided comments which were received either at the exhibitions, through the on-line questionnaire or by email and post.
- 2.13 To support the Vision, a Design Guide has also been prepared. The draft version of the Design Guide was considered by the Harlow and Gilston Garden Town Quality Review Panel in July 2018. The Panel considered that the Design Guide, when read in conjunction with the Vision, showed promise as a clear prospectus, the key audience for which is intended to be developers and landowners aiming to bring forward development within the Garden Town. The Panel raised some questions around the status and purpose of the document, again setting out the importance of giving it formal weight in the planning process. A copy of the Quality Review Panel's full report is attached for information at **Appendix 'E'**.
- 2.14 A final draft version of the Design Guide was taken to the Quality Review Panel for a Chair's Review in October 2018. The review focused on the set of design quality questions included in the Design Guide, which applicants will be asked to demonstrate answers to through their proposals. These questions will be used by officers and the Quality Review Panel when reviewing proposals to ensure that these meet the expectations of quality within the Garden Town. The Panel emphasised the need for clarity within the document on the purpose and use of the Design Guide and design quality questions and focused on the wording of the design quality questions to ensure the onus for demonstration of quality and breadth was with the applicants. A copy of the Chair's Review report is attached for information at Appendix 'F'. Design Guide

- 2.15 Following the consultation events, site promoter engagement, and taking into account the recommendations of the Quality Review Panel, Allies and Morrison were tasked with summarising the main points raised. A table setting out the comments is attached for information at **Appendix 'G'**. A number of amendments have been made to both the Vision and the Design Guide, as detailed in the table.
- 2.16 The final Vision and Design Guide documents are attached at **Appendix 'B' and 'C'** and it is recommended that these are agreed as material planning considerations<sup>1</sup> when assessing site specific masterplans, the emerging Gilston Area Charter, pre-application proposals, planning applications and for any other Development Management purposes. This will ensure that development proposals will achieve garden town ambitions, and that clear parameters are established for future masterplanning and consideration of planning applications across the Garden Town.

#### List of Appendices

Appendix 'B' – Garden Town Vision, November 2018

Appendix 'C' – Garden Town Design Guide, November 2018

Appendix 'D' – Quality Review Panel report, Garden Town Vision, 24 May 2018

Appendix 'E' – Quality Review Panel report, Garden Town Design Guide, 19 July 2018

Appendix 'F' – Quality Review Panel Chair's Review report, Garden Town Design Guide, 24 October 2018

Appendix 'G' – Garden Town Vision and Design Guide consultation comments table

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<sup>1</sup> A material planning consideration is a matter that should be taken into account in deciding a planning application or on an appeal against a planning decision.