

Agenda Item: **XX**

Report to: **HARLOW AND GILSTON GARDEN TOWN BOARD**

Title: **Endorsement of Draft HGGT Sustainability Guidance and Checklist for Consultation**

Date: **28th September 2020**

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Enclosures: **Draft HGGT Sustainability Guidance & Checklist**

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

The Harlow & Gilston Garden Town seeks to set the agenda for sustainable living through ensuring growth that will be net carbon neutral by 2030 and building strong and integrated communities across new and existing places. The UK Government has declared a Climate Emergency, with all five HGGT Partner Authorities also declaring a Climate Emergency / Action. This Sustainability Guidance & Checklist supports the highest commitment across the Garden Town authorities, which is to become Carbon-Neutral by 2030.

This document provides practical and technical guidance on how relevant sustainability indicators and policies (environmental, social, and economic) in the HGGT Vision, HGGT draft Transport Strategy and partner authorities' Local Plans will be applied to new strategic developments in the Garden Town.

The Guidance & Checklist is to be used by applicants and partner authority officers when preparing and discussing masterplans, pre-application proposals, planning and discharge of conditions applications. This will ensure coordinated and integrated consideration of sustainability principles and targets at an early stage across the Garden Town. The Guidance and Checklist applied to major developments (10 homes and above).

Once consulted upon and with comments incorporated, the document will be endorsed to be a material planning consideration in the assessment of planning applications for developments coming forward within the Garden Town. It will inform pre-application discussions and assist decision-makers in sustainability matters. The document will also be utilised for HGGT Quality Review Panel reviews to help form the basis of environmental and socio-economic sustainability discussions.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 1. To agree this report;**
 - 2. To recommend that officers for the three Garden Town local planning authorities use this report at meetings of the East Herts Executive on 6th October 2020, Harlow Cabinet on 15th October 2020 and Epping Forest District Council Cabinet on 19th October 2020 to agree that the draft HGGT Sustainability Guidance and Checklist is published for a six-week period of public consultation from October – December 2020; and**
 - 3. To note that, following consultation and any subsequent revisions to the document, it is intended that the final HGGT Sustainability Guidance & Checklist will be endorsed as a material planning consideration for the preparation of masterplans, pre-application advice, assessing planning applications and any other development management purposes.**
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1. Introduction

- 1.1 The HGGT Sustainability Guidance and Checklist has been prepared in-house, led by the HGGT Sustainability Officer in the HGGT Quality Design workstream (now

Placeshaping & Engagement Workstream) with input from all partner authorities and external expertise where appropriate. The Guidance and Checklist is intended to provide practical and technical guidance for applicants and officers, in relation to environmental, social and economic sustainability within the Garden Town.

- 1.2 The Harlow & Gilston Garden Town seeks to set the agenda for sustainable living through ensuring growth that will be net carbon neutral by 2030, and building strong and integrated communities across new and existing places. The UK Government has declared a Climate Emergency, with all five HGGT Partner Authorities also declaring a Climate Emergency / Action. This Sustainability Guidance & Checklist supports the highest commitment across the Garden Town authorities, which is to become Carbon-Neutral by 2030.
- 1.3 The Guidance and Checklist relate directly to the principles and indicators within the HGGT Vision, draft HGGT Transport Strategy and Local Planning Authorities adopted and emerging Local Plan policies and SPDs.
- 1.4 The Guidance and Checklist covers the following topics in a simple format, to enable maximum accessibility, use and consistency:

Introduction

Environmental Sustainability

- Design Approach: First Principles
- Energy Efficient & Carbon Reduction
- Renewable Energy
- Sustainable Movement
- Water Management
- Green Infrastructure & Biodiversity
- Air Quality
- Circular Economy: Waste Reduction
- Assuring Performance

Socio-Economic Sustainability

- Socio-Economic Sustainability: First Principles
- Creating Strong Communities
- Health & Wellbeing
- Voice & Influence

- Social Infrastructure
- Circular Economy
- Economic Growth

Appendices

- HGGT Documents Chart
- Climate Emergency Declarations
- Whole Life Carbon Assessment
- LETI Heat Decision Tree
- Model Planning Condition and Obligations wording
- Post-Occupancy Evaluation Reporting

1.5 The Guidance & Checklist is to be used by applicants and partner authority officers when preparing and discussing masterplans, pre-application proposals, planning and discharge of conditions applications. This will ensure coordinated and integrated consideration of sustainability principles and targets at an early stage across the Garden Town.

2. Process undertaken

2.1 There has been extensive input from officers from all partner authorities into the draft HGGT Sustainability Guidance and Checklist, with a number of rounds of engagement across various services and departments in order to create a holistic and agreed guidance and checklists questions on a broad range of topics. This has included whole-document reviews through the Quality Design workstream, as well as specific topic-focused workshops with relevant officers.

2.2 An early draft of the HGGT Sustainability Guidance and Checklist was reviewed by the Garden Town Quality Review Panel (QRP) on 24th January 2020; the full QRP report is attached as Appendix 'B'. The review was undertaken by the panel chair and two sustainability experts, and particular questions for the panel focused the document's legibility, whether it is sufficiently robust to be implemented by officers and applicants; whether it is ambitious enough; any omissions; and how strong incentives can be incorporated to encourage applicants to aim for 'best practice'.

2.3 The QRP welcomed and supported the aspirations of the document and its layout and clarity, but recommended focusing on where this document could have the most immediate impact – in particular in terms of audience e.g. housebuilders and local authority officers. The panel also recommended being clearer through the RAG checklist on the outcomes being sought, as well as the need for more work on how the guidance would be applied during planning and post-completion. The panel

recommended providing greater emphasis on the importance of masterplanning and placeshaping in achieving sustainable places, and the critical need for training and resourcing for officers to meet sustainability ambitions.

- 2.4 Expert advice was also commissioned from the UK Green Building Council (UKGBC), through the facilitation of two Sustainability Workshops on 5th February 2020, to review and discuss the draft Guidance and Checklist with over 30 experts in Sustainability in attendance. A summary of recommendations from the UKGBC workshops included; being more bespoke in terms of audience and development type; re-organising the RAG checklists to state achievement of specific targets (e.g. Net Zero Carbon by 2030); using the guidance to facilitate collaboration of developers to achieve sustainable goals; provide clarity on the overlaps between different requirements and sections in the guidance; consider the commissioning of a green infrastructure map, a social value map, and undertaking a detailed assessment of residents' needs across the Garden Town; develop a comprehensive training programme, and; the importance of the Garden Town playing a key role in driving best practice, through coordination, communications, messaging, and awards.
- 2.5 Engagement with local stakeholders, developers and members has also been undertaken, to enable shaping of the guidance at an early stage. A HGGT Developer Forum to workshop the Guidance and Checklist was held virtually on 7th May 2020, with 29 attendees, two All-Member Workshops have been held on 27th July 2020 and 26th August 2020, and a Socio-Economic Sustainability Workshop with a number of local groups, charities and organisations within the Garden Town was held on the 29th July 2020. Comments and queries from these sessions have been tracked, incorporated and/or responded to within the updated Guidance and Checklist where possible. This has led to a number of clarifications in the document, including in the overarching narrative, to ensure it remains accessible and clear in terms of the sustainability ambitions of the Garden Town, the importance of integration of new and existing residents as a socio-economic sustainability goal, as well as the impact of COVID-19.
- 2.6 The document has been through a series of iterations to respond to the recommendations and comments received. Given the broad scope of topics, it has also become clear that there are some elements which are beyond the scope of this document, and which will need to be considered for potential future work, such as sustainability advice for retrofit and refurbishment, a wider Landscape Strategy for the Garden Town, and ensuring consistent information and best practice for engagement and integration in the upcoming HGGT Communications Strategy.

- 2.7 The amended draft HGGT Sustainability Guidance and Checklist is attached as Appendix 'A' and the Board is asked to agree recommendations 1-3 set out at the start of this report.

3. Endorsement and Consultation

- 3.1 Following endorsement for consultation from the Garden Town Member Board, the draft HGGT Sustainability Guidance and Checklist will be taken to the Garden Town local planning authorities' Cabinets/ Executives ahead of public consultation in October. Subject to the Board agreement, the Cabinets/ Executives of the GT LPAs will be asked to agree that the draft HGGT Sustainability Guidance and Checklist is published for a six-week period of public consultation in October – December 2020; and to note that following consultation and any subsequent revisions to the document, it is intended that the final HGGT Sustainability Guidance and Checklist will be agreed as a material planning consideration for the preparation of masterplans, pre-application advice, assessing planning applications and any other development management purposes.
- 3.2 Consultation on the Guidance and Checklist will take place over a six week period from October – December 2020. Given current restrictions on in-person engagement due to COVID-19, we will focus on reaching a broad audience primarily through digital and, where possible, non-digital means. The consultation will seek to include:

Digital engagement:

- HGGT Sustainability Guidance and Checklist available for viewing on HGGT website, with links to this from partner authority websites.
- Overview of document via accessible pre-recorded video available for viewing on HGGT website.
- Digital questionnaire / survey available for viewing and completing on HGGT website.
- Staffed online webinars and Q&A for particular stakeholder groups (e.g. Local residents and Community Groups, Developers, Members, Youth Councils, Partner Officers)
- Social Media awareness campaign (via HGGT and partner authorities).
- Notification of consultation via LPA Planning Policy databases and statutory consultees.

Non-digital engagement:

- Limited number of hard copy consultation packs, on request: leaflet/ poster information to provide summary, and link/ QR Code to online document, and to provide hard copy of questionnaire/ survey.

- A COVID-19 secure staffed event within the Garden Town, with a small number of hard copies of the document available for review, if this is considered safe to do so.
- 3.3 Consultation arrangements will be put in place over the coming month and will be advertised ahead of the consultation, in accordance with the adopted Statements of Community Involvement of the respective local planning authorities.
- 3.4 The Garden Town is also aiming to simultaneously consult publicly on the HGGT Healthy Town Framework (this consultation was approved by the Board in July 2019). Epping Forest District Council will also be consulting on the draft EFDC Sustainability Guidance documents (Major Developments and Minor Developments) which are aligned in format and scope to the HGGT Sustainability Guidance and Checklist. Attention will be given to explaining these separate documents, their purpose and use, and where they align or diverge.

4. Next Steps

- 4.1 Once the Sustainability Guidance and Checklists has been finalised and endorsed by the Garden Town Board, following consultation, the next steps will be to:
- Ensure the Guidance and Checklist is embedded into the masterplanning and planning processes for the new Garden Town communities and developments;
 - Develop a comprehensive training programme for Officers and Members on the Sustainability Guidance, best practice and robust use of the document.
 - Develop Guidance for Retrofit and Refurbishment within the Garden Town, based on the LETI Retrofit Workstream outputs.

Appendices

Appendix 'A' – Draft Sustainability Guidance and Checklist, September 2020

Appendix 'B' – QRP Report on Draft Sustainability Guidance and Checklist, January 2020