

Agenda Item: 8

Report to: HARLOW AND GILSTON GARDEN TOWN BOARD

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

Date: 28th September 2020

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Enclosures: Draft HGGT Sustainability Guidance & Checklist
HGGT QRP Report for draft Sustainability Guidance & Checklist

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

The Harlow & Gilston Garden Town (HGGT) seeks to set the agenda for sustainable living by ensuring growth will be net carbon neutral by 2030 and building strong and integrated communities across new and existing neighbourhoods.

The UK Government and all five HGGT partner Authorities have declared a Climate Emergency. The partner Authorities have adopted various actions to respond to the emergency. The HGGT Sustainability Guidance & Checklist supports the primary commitment across the Garden Town Authorities, namely 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 Authorities 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 of the development process across the Garden Town. The Guidance and Checklist will be applied to all major developments, categorised as 10 homes and above.

Once consulted upon, and with comments incorporated, the Guidance can 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 Guidance will also be applied by the HGGT

Quality Review Panel to help form the basis of environmental and socio-economic sustainability discussions and reviews.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. **To note the report as set out and the draft HGGT Sustainability Guidance & Checklist as attached in Appendix A.**
 2. **To recommend that the draft HGGT Sustainability Guidance & Checklist is submitted to the East Herts Executive on 6th October 2020, to Harlow Cabinet on 15th October 2020 and to Epping Forest District Council Cabinet on 19th October 2020 with the recommendation to agree that the draft HGGT Sustainability Guidance and Checklist is published for a six-week period of public consultation from October – December 2020 in their respective Districts.**
 3. **To note that, following the public consultation and any subsequent revisions to the document, it is intended that the final HGGT Sustainability Guidance & Checklist will be endorsed by the three District Councils as a material planning consideration for the preparation of masterplans, pre-application advice, assessing planning applications and any other development management purposes within the Harlow & Gilston Garden Town.**
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1. Introduction

- 1.1 The HGGT Sustainability Guidance & Checklist has been prepared by the Garden Town, led by the HGGT Sustainability Officer in the HGGT Quality Design workstream, (now the Placeshaping & Engagement Workstream), with input from all partner authorities and external expertise where appropriate. The Guidance & Checklist is intended to provide practical and technical assistance to both Planning applicants and officers, in relation to environmental, social and economic sustainability within the Garden Town.

I.2 The Guidance & Checklist are consistent with the principles and indicators within the HGGT Vision, draft HGGT Transport Strategy and the Local Planning Authorities adopted and emerging Local Plan policies and SPDs.

I.3 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 Management
- Assuring Performance

Socio-Economic Sustainability

- Introduction
- 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
- Standard Planning Conditions / Obligations
- Post-Occupancy Evaluation Templates

I.4 The Guidance & Checklist is intended to be used by applicants and partner Authorities 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 all partner Authorities into the draft Guidance & Checklist, with engagement across various Authority services and departments in order to create a holistic and agreed single guidance with a suite of checklists questions across a broad range of themes. This process has included whole-document reviews through the Quality Design workstream, as well as specific topic-focused workshops.
- 2.2 An early draft of the HGGT Sustainability Guidance & 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 QRP focused on the document's legibility, whether it was sufficiently robust to be implemented by officers and applicants; whether it was ambitious enough; any omissions; and how strong incentives could 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 relation to audience e.g. housebuilders and Local Authority officers. The Panel also recommended being clearer through the RAG checklist on the outcomes being sought and suggested further work on how the guidance would be applied during planning and post-completion. The QRP recommended providing greater emphasis on the importance of masterplanning and placeshaping in achieving sustainable places, and the critical need for training and resourcing for Local Authority officers to deliver the 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 & 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; providing clarity on the overlaps between different requirements and sections in the guidance; considering the commissioning of a green infrastructure map, a social value map, and undertaking a detailed assessment of residents' needs across the Garden Town; developing 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 elected Members has also been undertaken, to help shape the guidance at an early stage. An HGGT Developer Forum workshop on the Guidance & Checklist was held virtually on 7th May 2020, with 29 attendees; two All-Member Workshops were held on 27th July 2020 and 26th August 2020. A Socio-Economic Sustainability Workshop with a number of local community and voluntary sector groups and organisations based 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 & Checklist. 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 and acknowledging 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 & Checklist is attached as Appendix 'A' and the Board is asked to agree Recommendations 1-3 set out in this report.

3. Endorsement and Consultation

- 3.1 It is proposed that following an endorsement for consultation from the HGGT Board, the draft HGGT Sustainability Guidance & Checklist will be taken to the District Council Cabinets/ Executives for approval to formally consult in their respective Districts for a six week consultation in October - December 2020 and to note that, following consultation and any subsequent revisions to the document and that the final HGGT Sustainability Guidance & Checklist to be endorsed as a material planning consideration for the preparation of masterplans, pre-application advice, assessing planning applications and any other development management purposes within the Garden Town.
- 3.2 Given current restrictions on face to face engagement due to COVID-19, it is intended that the consultation will focus on reaching a broad audience primarily through digital channels, non-digital means will be available to ensure maximum accessibility but will be subject to social distancing rules and guidance. 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 and will be advertised ahead of the formal consultation period, in accordance with the adopted Statements of Community Involvement of the respective Local Planning Authorities.

3.4 HGGT is also planning to consult on the Sustainability Guidance & Checklist in parallel with the HGGT Healthy Town Framework. This consultation has been previously approved by the HGGT 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 & 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 draft HGGT Sustainability Guidance & Checklist has been endorsed for consultation by the HGGT Board, the next steps will be:

- Ask LPA Executive/ Cabinets to agree that the draft HGGT Sustainability Guidance & Checklist is published for a six-week period of public consultation in October – December 2020;
- Public consultation is undertaken;
- Consideration of comments and production of final Guidance & Checklist;
- Submit the final version of the HGGT Sustainability Guidance & Checklist to the HGGT Board in early 2021 with the recommendation that it be considered for endorsement as a material planning consideration by the District Councils;

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- The final version of the HGGT Sustainability Guidance & Checklist will be submitted to the District Councils' Executive/ Cabinets in early 2021 to be formally endorsed as a material planning consideration;
- Ensure the Guidance & Checklist is embedded into the masterplanning and planning processes for the new Garden Town communities, neighbourhoods and developments;
- Develop a comprehensive and bespoke training programmes for elected Members and for Local Authority officers on the Guidance, best practice and application of the Guidance & Checklist; and
- Develop an additional HGGT Sustainability Guidance document for Retrofit and Refurbishment, based on the LETI Retrofit Workstream outputs.

Appendices

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

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

