

Report to the Council

Committee: Cabinet
Date: 4 April 2023
Subject: Place Portfolio
Portfolio Holder: Councillor Nigel Bedford

Recommending:

That the report of the Place Portfolio Holder be noted.

1. Local Plan

Adoption

At long last, the Epping Forest District Local Plan 2011 to 2033 was adopted at an Extraordinary Meeting of the Council on 6 March 2023. This is now the statutory development plan, which means it has full weight in determining planning applications (together with 'made' neighbourhood development plans where relevant). The newly adopted Local Plan supersedes the Local Plan which comprised the policies within the Epping Forest District Local Plan adopted January 1998 that had not previously been replaced and the Epping Forest District Local Plan Alterations adopted July 2006.

The Local Plan sets out a housing requirement of 11,400 new homes for the whole period, which started in 2011 and therefore homes that have already been built since 2011 are included. The last figures we have that were taken in March 2022, show that over 3,000 homes have already been built and around 1800 additional homes were either being built or had planning permission.

A significant proportion of the remaining new homes to be built will be located will be in new Garden Town Communities at Latton Priory, East of Harlow and Water Lane, close to Harlow as well as at North Weald Bassett and Waltham Abbey, which in total will accommodate a minimum of 5,660 of the remaining new homes to be built.

The adopted Local Plan along with the associated Policies Map, Adoption Statement, Habitats Regulations Assessment Adoption Statement, Sustainability Appraisal Adoption Statement and associated Sustainability Appraisal Reports were published on the Council's website on 14 March 2023. The adopted Local Plan is subject to a legal challenge period of six weeks from this date.

North Weald Airfield Strategic Masterplan

Cabinet on 13 March 2023 agreed that the North Weald Airfield Strategic Masterplan be formally endorsed following public consultation between December 2021 and

February 2022 and review. North Weald Airfield has been allocated in the Local Plan as a Masterplan area under P6 North Weald Bassett and requires the provision of 10ha of additional employment floorspace together with the protection and intensification of existing employment floorspace on the eastern side of the airfield land, which is achieved by this masterplan. It also provides new and improved public walking and cycle links and the preservation and enhancement of the Grade II listed Control Tower and its setting. The Masterplan has been developed to ensure that airfield activities are not unacceptably impacted by any future development.

This is the first of the Council's proposed Masterplans to be approved and will be an important material consideration in the determination of future planning applications, and to inform pre-application advice, assessing planning and any other development management purposes relating to the site.

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.

Key updates in terms of the Garden Town are:

- The draft Latton Priory Strategic Masterplan Framework (SMF), a masterplan area which is within Epping Forest District and the Garden Town, is being progressed and updated following public consultation. There will be a Member Briefing arranged in May/ June, with endorsement of the SMF programmed for June/ July 2023.
- The Latton Priory Design Code is being undertaken in-house by the EFDC Implementation Team, funded as part of the Dept For Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) Pathfinders Programme. Community engagement through design workshops has taken place with local schools, youth councils and Voluntary Action Epping Forest with older people, to talk about design coding.
- 'Your Quality of Life', funded by DLUHC PropTech Round 2, enabled large scale digital and on-digital engagement across the garden town on people's quality of life. The 'Your Quality of Life Community Feedback Report' and 'Reflections and Recommendations Report' have been published online and are available on HGGT website.
- HGGT is currently engaging local businesses and shoppers in travel surveys to understand their travel patterns across the Garden Town area, as part of the HGGT Mode Share Monitoring. This surveying work is taking place throughout March 2023.

- On 28 February the outline planning application for the Gilston Area Villages 1-6 (8,500 homes) was given a resolution to grant permission by East Herts District Council planning committee. This is the first of the new HGGT communities to reach this milestone.

3. Sustainable Transport

DaRT87 Demand Responsive Transport

The Flexiroute app had been a key requirement to help increase and widen usage of DaRT87 with 123 downloads to end in January 2023. Around 400 individual passenger trips were made between April and December 2022 on DaRT services with fare revenue returned to EFDC rarely exceeding £300 per month. The introduction of a £2 flat fare ahead of DfT's national £2 fare offer, now extended to June, has not had quite the desired effect on usage in pure financial terms, but it has been important in pure social value terms, running throughout the pandemic and beyond, helping key workers and others without easy access to cars make important trips.

4. Climate Change

Climate Change Action Plan Scoping Exercise

Following the Climate Change Officer returning to work, a scoping exercise is taking place to map climate related activity and policy across the organisation. Following this exercise, we are looking to set up a task group to oversee the implementation of the Climate Change Action Plan and include in the PMO reporting to ensure corporate oversight and governance.

Climate Change in Council Policies and Decision Making

The following key objective is included in the updated Corporate Plan 2023-27:

“We will strive to reduce pollution and protect our environment, encouraging jobs, housing, and infrastructure that complements, rather than competes with the natural world.”

This aims to embed the Council's pledge to be net zero by 2030 into key policy and establish climate change as a priority.