

Report to the Cabinet

Report reference: **C-036-2018/19**

Date of meeting: **7 March 2019**



**Epping Forest
District Council**

Portfolio: **Planning**

Subject: **Harlow and Gilston Garden Town Transport Strategy**

Responsible Officer: **Alison Blom-Cooper (01992 564066).**

Democratic Services: **Adrian Hendry (01992 564246).**

Recommendations/Decisions Required:

- (1) To agree that the draft Harlow and Gilston Garden Town Transport Strategy (January 2019) is published for a six-week period of public consultation following the May elections; and**
- (2) To note that, following consultation and any subsequent revisions to the document, it is intended that the final Transport Strategy will be agreed as a material planning consideration for the preparation of masterplans, the preparation of the Gilston Area Charter, pre-application advice, assessing planning applications and any other development management purposes**

Executive Summary:

Harlow and Gilston was designated as a Garden Town by the Ministry for Homes, Communities and Local Government in January 2017 and will comprise new and existing communities in and around Harlow. East Herts, Epping Forest and Harlow District Councils are working together with Hertfordshire and Essex County Councils to ensure plans for the Garden Town support sustainable living and a healthy economy; provide a good quality of life for existing and future residents; and respond to local landscape and character.

AECOM were commissioned in May 2018 to prepare a transport strategy working with the Councils across the Garden Town. Transport has a critical role to play in facilitating housing and employment growth. The Transport Strategy is intended to be a high level document which sets out the key aims, objectives and principles in relation to movement, travel and transport in and around the Garden Town. The Draft Transport Strategy has now been agreed by the Harlow and Gilston Garden Town Member Board and the next stage is to seek agreement from this Council to publish the draft strategy for a period of consultation.

Reasons for Proposed Decision:

To agree the Draft Transport Strategy to be published for a six week period of public consultation following the May elections. Following consultation and any subsequent revision to the document it is intended to give suitable planning weight to the strategy by endorsing it as a material planning consideration, to ensure that development proposals will achieve garden town ambitions, and that clear parameters are established for future masterplanning pre-application advice, assessing planning applications and any other development

management purposes within the Harlow and Gilston Garden Town

Other Options for Action:

Not to agree the Draft Transport Strategy for consultation would mean that there would be no agreed approach to 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 in relation to movement, travel and transport

Report:

1. As part of the work for the Garden Town, EFDC has been working with Essex County Council, Hertfordshire County Council, Harlow Council and East Herts Council. AECOM were commissioned to prepare a Garden Town Transport Strategy in May 2018. The Transport Strategy is intended to be a high level document which sets out the key aims, objectives and principles in relation to movement, travel and transport in and around the Garden Town. A copy of the Draft Transport Strategy is attached as Appendix A.

Why does Harlow and Gilston Garden Town need a Transport Strategy

2. Planned significant housing growth will fuel an increase in travel demand. Economic growth is a national priority and will be needed to provide employment for the growing population. Transport also has a critical role to play in facilitating housing and employment growth. However we cannot simply build more road capacity to accommodate this growth.
3. With increasing travel demand, continued reliance on high levels of single occupancy car use will result in worsening congestion which will constrain growth. Meeting this demand through significant increases in highway capacity will be expensive to deliver, will displace congestion to other locations, and will have significant adverse environmental impacts. Experience shows that new road capacity will soon be filled by additional trips reducing the initial benefits of investment.
4. Achieving a change in travel behaviours, including reducing the need to travel, and focusing on active travel modes (such as walking and cycling), will help facilitate sustainable growth and have wider social benefits, such as addressing health concerns.
5. Transport and travel is rapidly evolving and new transport services need to be flexible and adaptable to changing technology, such as real time travel information and electric vehicles.
6. Public transport will also need to be adaptable to changing market conditions and demands, such as possible longer-term conversion to Rapid Transport Systems (segregated light rail or guided systems such as electric tram or metro systems) or Bus Rapid Transport (high quality, high frequency bus-based equivalent), together with integration between modes and more demand responsive transport.
7. The Transport Strategy sets out guidance that will assist the Councils, developers and

transport providers to consider and plan for how Harlow and Gilston Garden Town will achieve the challenge of future travel demand linked to planned growth. The Transport Strategy has been prepared to deliver the Harlow and Gilston Garden Town Vision through identifying measures to reduce the need to travel, whilst recognising that travel will continue to be important in our daily lives.

The Transport Strategy sets out three key objectives to:

- (i) Achieve a target where 60% of all journeys within the new Garden Town Communities¹, and 50% of all journeys across Harlow, will be undertaken by sustainable modes (including walking, cycling and public transport)².
 - (ii) Ensure mobility options are based on a hierarchy of importance:
 - a. Reduce the need to travel
 - b. Walking and cycling
 - c. Public transport
 - d. Private vehicles
 - (iii) Support and encourage a culture of active and sustainable travel ensuring all journeys will be efficient and safe.
8. The planned housing and economic growth for the Garden Town provides a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to deliver a step-change in travel behaviour. Ensuring that transport infrastructure and services can adapt to new technologies, innovative new service models and changing habits is fundamental to ensure long term benefits for the Garden Town.
9. The Transport Strategy sets out existing movement challenges and seeks to maximise opportunities in order to create an attractive sustainable transportation network which benefits all members of the community. The Garden Town is well placed to provide a healthy and well-connected environment for existing and future residents and workers, and there is already good infrastructure in place to improve upon.
10. To maximise opportunities, the Strategy sets out a series of actions as follows:
- Action 1 – Reducing the need to travel
 - Action 2 – Making better use of existing infrastructure
 - Action 3 – Supporting and encouraging a culture of active and sustainable travel

¹ Epping Forest District Council, Harlow Council and East Herts Council are collectively allocating new neighbourhoods to the east, west and south and new villages to the north of Harlow as new communities within the Harlow and Gilston Garden Town.

² Currently 34% of travel within the town is by sustainable modes (see page six of the Transport Strategy).

- Action 4 – Sustainable transport corridors
 - Action 5 – Supporting walking and cycling
 - Action 6 – Public transport
 - Action 7 – Infrastructure for road based travel
 - Action 8 – Anticipating change
11. The Transport Strategy has undergone a significant amount of scrutiny during its preparation to ensure that it is fit for purpose. In particular, a draft of the Transport Strategy was reviewed by the Garden Town Quality Review Panel (QRP) on 11 October 2018. The Panel's report is attached for reference at Appendix B
 12. The session was very useful and the Panel made some helpful and insightful comments. The Panel felt that the Draft Transport Strategy provides a good high-level statement of intent that is readable and ambitious. However, they expressed concern that the Strategy's core priorities were not reflected in the actions set out in the document. The Panel also felt that the document needed to include timelines, robust data and analysis on the problems being addressed, more nuanced targets and sub-targets, and clear indications of how priorities are to be translated into actions. The Panel advised that this would require greater clarity about aims, objectives and actions; in particular, the panel questioned how developers and others could respond to the Strategy, for example in creating masterplans.
 13. Officers gave consideration as to how to best incorporate / take account of the QRP's comments. It was agreed that some of the points that the QRP made would be best addressed through the next stages of work to be undertaken to support the Transport Strategy in order to preserve the Transport Strategy itself as a high level document setting out aims and ambitions. The more detailed work required to address some of the points that the Panel made will be picked up in subsequent documents as part of the implementation plan for the Transport Strategy.
 14. It was considered however, that the draft Transport Strategy could be amended to reflect other points that the QRP made and it was felt that these amendments should be incorporated prior to publication of the draft Strategy for consultation. As a result of this, finalisation of the draft Transport Strategy was delayed and, due to the upcoming Local Plan examination hearing sessions and local elections, it is not now feasible to carry out the consultation until later on in the year, after the elections and Local Plan hearing sessions have taken place.

Consultation

15. It is proposed that the Transport Strategy is published for a six-week period of public consultation following the May elections. It is anticipated that consultation will include staffed exhibitions, as well as an online response form/questionnaire. Consultation arrangements will be put in place over the coming months and will be advertised ahead of the consultation.
16. Following public consultation, the final Transport Strategy will be presented to a Garden Town Board meeting in Autumn 2019 and it will then be given final formal

approval by the partner local planning authorities, through their formal decision making processes.

17. Members are also requested to note the intention is that the final Transport Strategy 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. This will help to 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 in relation to movement, travel and transport. Prior to and following final adoption of the Strategy, the Local Plan policies for each of the District Councils, along with the transport policies of the County Councils will continue to be used to shape and assess development proposals.

Next steps

18. The Transport Strategy will ensure a unified approach to the delivery of the Garden Town, as set out in the respective Local Plans and the Vision for the Garden Town. It provides an opportunity to support a pattern of development that minimises the need for travel, minimises journey lengths, encourages sustainable active travel, and enables accessibility for all members of the community.
19. Next steps include:
- Ensuring the Transport Strategy is considered when preparing masterplans or guidance for development across the Garden Town;
 - Securing infrastructure funding , initially in the form of £151m from the Housing and Infrastructure Fund;
 - Securing developer funding for infrastructure;
 - Developing a delivery plan to produce a detailed programme for delivery of the actions set out in the Transport Strategy.

Resource Implications:

The successful delivery of the Garden Town sites within Epping Forest District requires a significant commitment of EFDC Officer time. The approval of the recommendations contained within this report will not give rise to additional resource implications, but will help to facilitate the bring forward of growth within the Garden Town and ensuring that the need for travel using the private car is minimised.

Legal and Governance Implications:

The Draft Transport Strategy has been developed in the context of Government Policy (NPPF) and Planning Practice Guidance.

Safer, Cleaner and Greener Implications:

The Draft Transport Strategy seeks to take forward Local Plan policy designed to promote the notion of making good places to live, work and visit. This will include safer by design principles, sustainable development, the provision of alternatives to the car. Strategic Masterplans and Concept Frameworks will be the mechanism for these place-making measures to be delivered in identified Masterplan Areas.

Consultation Undertaken:

The Draft Transport Strategy has been developed in partnership with other local authorities in the Garden Town. The next stage is to undertake more widespread consultation with local communities and site promoters.

Background Papers:

- Sustainable transport corridor study - Systra

Risk Management:

The consultation on the Draft Transport Strategy will support the Council's objectives of achieving sustainable development in the District and encourage modal shift.