

Planning and Development Control

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Dear Cllr Philip

EPPING FOREST LOCAL PLAN – REGULATION 18 and 19 – WITHDRAWING OBJECTIONS

In light of changing circumstances and on-going collaborative work through the Harlow and Gilston Garden Town, this letter sets out Harlow's position in relation to the Epping Forest Local Plan.

Representations made at the Regulation 18 and 19 stages of the Epping Forest Local Plan highlighted concerns around infrastructure and transport measures for the Harlow area, in particular the impact of Latton Priory and Water Lane sites on the District, the future provision of affordable housing requirements for Harlow and Epping Forest Council's employment strategy.

Since these objections were first made, there has been significant progress made on the Harlow and Gilston Garden Town project to the point where these concerns are being addressed either through the procurement of joint pieces of evidence or through joint agreements. Each of the objections and Harlow Council's current position on them is set out below.

Latton Priory and Water Lane

Harlow Council supports the allocation of Latton Priory and Water Lane sites in the Epping Forest Local Plan. Harlow Council's Regulation 19 Local Plan includes them in Policy HGT1 as they form part of the Harlow and Gilston Garden Town and contribute towards the future sustainability and regeneration of the town. The Council's concerns regarding infrastructure and transport are now being addressed through various technical studies. This includes the preparation of a Sustainable Transport Corridor Study which will identify sustainable transport links between development sites and key services and facilities in Harlow. This will be underpinned by a Transport Strategy for the Garden Town setting out high level principles for the safe, convenient and sustainable movement of people and vehicles. A Garden Town wide Infrastructure Delivery Plan is also being prepared and will set out the infrastructure requirements for the area and mechanisms for funding and phasing.

This evidence will set out what transport measures and infrastructure is required to ensure Harlow remains a sustainable place to live and work and ensure that the impact of additional development is addressed.

We have now referenced these sites in our draft Local Plan which was endorsed for Regulation 19 consultation recently. Significant work has now been undertaken for the Sustainable Transport Corridor and Spatial Vision which stresses the importance of achieving the necessary model shift and appropriate access routes into the new developments.

Therefore the Council withdraws its objection to the strategic allocation of Latton Priory and Water Lane sites and the issues concerning infrastructure and transport are now being addressed in the joint technical reports being undertaken with Epping Forest.

Affordable Housing

The overall affordable housing need for the Strategic Housing Market Area is not disputed; however the way in which the provision is to be distributed, taking into consideration Harlow's acute affordable housing need, is a concern. It is appreciated that allocating affordable homes to people and waiting list arrangements is not a planning issue and therefore not a policy decision for the Local Plan. *Therefore in light of this the objection in relation to affordable housing in the Epping Forest Local Plan has been withdrawn.*

The affordable housing need in Harlow however is still an issue for both Harlow and the Harlow and Gilston Garden Town. The preparation of a Housing Strategy for the Garden Town, as agreed by all partners, will look into addressing this issue and is an agreed way forward.

Epping Forest Employment Strategy

A Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) has been prepared which sets out, amongst other things, how the authorities will work together to meet the full employment needs of the Functional Economic Market Area (FEMA), achieve a sustainable distribution of employment land and continue to engage with one another to support economic growth. The MOU will specifically develop an improved shared understanding around the economic growth of the FEMA, and specific future requirements of the Harlow and Gilston Garden Town, including the commissioning, interpretation and effective application of any future joint evidence work where required.

The MOU, as agreed by all local authorities, will address Harlow's original concerns regarding the Epping Forest employment strategy and therefore this objection has been withdrawn. Further employment work committed by the Garden Town Officer Board will investigate opportunities for developing and improving the employment offer for the area and identify further sites if required.

We welcome Epping Forest Council's commitment towards preparing these joint technical studies and your desire to reach consensus in respect of important cross-boundary planning matters. The strategy for developing and delivering the Garden Town has made significant progress over the last six months and as such this has addressed the concerns and objections originally made by Harlow Council. However if progress is not made to identify solutions to these concerns then Harlow Council reserves the right to change our position.

If you have any queries regarding this letter please contact Dianne Cooper, Planning and Building Control Manager in the first instance.

Yours faithfully



Cllr Danny Purton

Portfolio Holder for Environment