

Agenda Item 7

HARLOW AND GILSTON GARDEN TOWN

Report to: HARLOW AND GILSTON GARDEN TOWN BOARD

Title: HGGT Transport Strategy

Date: 12th October 2021

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Enclosures: Appendix 1 – HGGT Transport Strategy
Appendix 2 – HGGT High Level Transport Programme
Appendix 3 – HGGT Transport Strategy consultation report
Appendix 4 – HGGT Transport Strategy EQIA

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

This report seeks the formal endorsement of the final version of the HGGT Transport Strategy. The HGGT Transport Strategy is crucial in meeting the ambitions for sustainable movement within the HGGT Vision. The Strategy will be used in the masterplanning process and to secure funding from developers, central government and other bodies.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- I. That the HGGT Transport Strategy is approved by the HGGT Board to be submitted to the East Herts District Council Executive; the Epping Forest District Council Cabinet; the Harlow District Council Cabinet and the relevant portfolio holders of Essex and Hertfordshire County Councils to be endorsed for use as a material planning consideration for the preparation of masterplans, pre-application advice, assessing planning applications and any other development management purposes for the Harlow & Gilston Garden Town.**

- 2. To agree that the HGGT Director be authorised to make minor drafting or design amendments with the HGGT Chair’s approval to the HGGT Transport Strategy prior to publication if necessary.**

I Introduction

- 1.1 The HGGT Transport Strategy can be found at Appendix 1. It was developed to deliver the HGGT Vision in respect of the key principles for Healthy Growth through a focus on Sustainable Movement to support the scale of ambitious housing and economic growth set out in the Local Plans.
- 1.2 The Transport Strategy is consistent with the principles and indicators within the HGGT Vision, HGGT Sustainability Guidance & Checklist and the Local Planning Authorities adopted and emerging Local Plan policies. The Strategy is also consistent with the principles set out in the Town and Country Planning Association Garden Community guidance including the ambitious Modal Shift Objective at the core of the Transport Strategy (detailed below).
- 1.3 Since the publication of the draft Strategy the Government has released three important national transport strategy documents:
- Gear Change – A bold policy for walking and cycling – July 2020
 - Bus Back Better – National Bus Strategy for England – March 2021
 - Decarbonising Transport - A better greener Britain – July 2021
- 1.4 The HGGT Transport Strategy aligns with these documents including setting an ambitious mode share target; development of a Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan to invest in the active travel network; the development of the Sustainable Transport Corridors to enhance public transport operation; development of Enhanced Bus Partnerships in response to ‘Bus Back Better’ and developing strategies to introduce electric vehicle charging.
- 1.5 The Transport Strategy is intended to be used by applicants (for planning permission on sites located in the Garden Town) and partner Authorities when preparing and discussing masterplans, pre-application proposals, determining planning applications, considering Section 106 obligations and discharging conditions attached to planning permissions. This will ensure a consistent and integrated consideration of the key sustainable transport principles, objectives and priorities at the early stages of schemes and masterplans across the Garden Town.
- 1.6 A high level programme is set out in Appendix 2. Further work will need to be undertaken to refine this programme as schemes come forward for delivery and funding becomes available. This programme will be greatly informed by the HGGT Infrastructure Delivery Plan which will be regularly reviewed.

2 The Objectives, Principles and Actions

2.1 The HGGT Transport Strategy proposes one overarching Mode Share Objective, three Principles and is supported by five key actions. These are set out below:

2.2 The Objective

2.2.1 Mode Share Objective – 50% of all trips starting and/or ending in the existing communities of Harlow Town should be by active and sustainable travel modes and 60% of all trips starting and/or ending in the new Garden Communities of Harlow & Gilston Garden Town should be by active and sustainable travel modes.

2.3 The Principles

2.3.1 Principle 1 – User hierarchy: Decisions should be shaped by following the user hierarchy which gives priority to reducing unnecessary travel, walking, cycling and public transport.

2.3.2 Principle 2 – A culture of active and sustainable travel: The Garden Town should be an environment where active and sustainable travel is valued, prioritised, and supported to ensure that the associated social, environmental, wellbeing and economic benefits are available to everyone.

2.3.3 Principle 3 – Accessibility and Inclusion: Infrastructure should be designed for everyone and with consideration of those with the greatest need first. Everyone should have the opportunity to choose more sustainable and active modes of travel.

2.4 The Actions

2.4.1 Action 1: Enabling Choice ... creating connected communities that offer local facilities and travel options for everyday activities.

2.4.2 Action 2: Streets for People ... making our streets and neighbourhoods places that are safe, sociable and enjoyable – for everyone – by creating attractive places that people want to walk and cycle in.

2.4.3 Action 3: Quality Public Transport ... connecting people to the places they want to go, providing independence and mobility to those who need it most, while reducing air pollution and congestion. The development and delivery of the Sustainable Transport Corridor network will facilitate this.

2.4.4 Action 4: A Network that Works ... providing reliable, high-quality alternatives to private vehicles.

- 2.4.5 Action 5: Maximising Opportunities ... exploring and introducing new and innovative transport technologies as they develop.
- 2.5 Achieving the Mode Share Objective will require a generational change. It also has some interdependencies with progression of other policies and infrastructure at national and local levels, including the availability of funding. It is therefore recognised that it will be an incremental process but one that will require an extensive range of measures from the outset in the new Garden Communities and as soon as possible within the existing town. Appendix 2 presents a high level programme showing the mix of projects anticipated including discrete one-off proposals such as the Sustainable Transport Corridor network and rolling programmes of behaviour change incentives.
- 2.6 Covid 19 has had an impact on the way we travel, initially all travel was greatly reduced but with increase in walking and cycling as people remained active. The effects of Covid 19 will continue to impact on travel and mode share into the future. Car travel has now returned to similar pre-pandemic levels but public transport has not recovered. Operators expect ridership (the number of passengers using a particular mode of public transport) will take 3 years to recover. Working at home significantly increased but it is not yet clear whether employers will retain these practices or office space and expect employees to return and commute or continue to work at home or more flexibly.
- 2.7 Funding is required to develop schemes and initiatives through to delivery. Funding will be sought from a variety of sources such as developer contributions and Government grants e.g. the Housing Investment Grant (HIG), the Active Travel Fund, Levelling Up Fund, Capacity and Capability funding. Partners have already been successful in securing HIG funding, and the Towns fund with submissions recently made for Levelling Up and Active Travel Funding pending.
- 2.8 Securing the HIG enables the early delivery of essential transport infrastructure and sustainable transport corridors which have the potential to unlock planned growth in the Garden Town. The mechanisms associated with the HIG and Section 106 obligations associated with strategic schemes coming forward in the Garden Town area will enable the creation of the Rolling Investment Fund (RIF). The initial RIF is estimated to amount to circa £129m (subject to index linking) comprised of developer contributions towards the STCs, other potential infrastructure, initiatives, measures and mitigations associated with HGGT developments. In this way, all five partners (comprising three local planning authorities and two local highway authorities) have a vested interest in effective management of developer contributions comprised in the RIF and collective decision-making protocols and governance will be required to determine prioritisation of funding into the future HGGT transport infrastructure, projects, initiatives or measures as envisaged by this Transport Strategy (note there is a separate item on this meeting agenda regarding next steps for HIG and RIF (Item 9)).

- 2.9 The Strategy acknowledges that there will be continued use of private motor vehicle (i.e. 50% for the existing town and 40% for new Garden Communities, based on the Mode Share Objective) but reliance on high levels of private car use is not sustainable in the context of the levels of growth set out in the Local Plans. Continuing to do so will result in increased congestion, which is likely to impede planned growth and will have negative impacts on quality of life in the Garden Town, especially to deliver quality places to live and work.
- 2.10 The Strategy does not advocate increasing highway capacity as the default 'predict and provide' response, taking instead a 'vision and validate' response – developing schemes that align with the HGGT Vision rather than continued provision of extra road capacity. Through this approach the Strategy promotes redesigning the transport network and supporting residents and businesses to bring about a modal shift towards active, sustainable and inclusive modes of travel.

3 The Sustainable Transport Corridor (STC) Network

- 3.1 A key element of the Garden Town Vision and a critical enabling factor of planned growth is the ambition for new and existing residents to adopt active and sustainable travel behaviours.
- 3.2 To meet this ambition and support the planned growth, the Strategy includes the development of a network of sustainable transport corridors (STCs) (p.37) and a rapid bus transport system (a high-quality, frequent and fast bus service) which will help new and existing residents travel quickly and sustainably in and around the Garden Town. The sustainable transport corridors will also improve the facilities for those walking and cycling.
- 3.3 Design work continues on the network with the North to Centre section being the most advanced and to be funded by HIG grant. It is anticipated that this will be consulted on in the near future.

4 Enhanced Bus Partnership and Operation

- 4.1 An essential part of the STCs is the delivery and management of the public transport services and potentially other initiatives for the benefit of the customer. The Government's "Bus Back Better" strategy proposed a number of options for Local Highways Authorities to adopt to improve public transport. Both Essex and Hertfordshire County Councils have decided to introduce Enhanced Bus Partnerships, Hertfordshire building upon its existing quality partnership. Through an Enhanced Partnership, services can be controlled and regulated including quality, level of service, ticketing and branding for a future HGGT service. Further work is required on the scope and extent of the enhanced partnerships covering the HGGT area and consultation will be required with users and operators at the relevant time.

5 Consultation

- 5.1 The draft Transport Strategy was subject to public consultation in early 2020 (including exhibitions, Member briefings, village halls and workshops with key stakeholders) just before the Covid-19 lockdown and results were presented to the Board in June 2020. Further consultation was requested to secure input from unrepresented groups – specifically young people, businesses and local organisations – and to increase the overall consultation response.
- 5.2 A second round of consultation was therefore conducted over 4 weeks in late 2020. This consultation focused on young people, businesses, charities and internal Officers through a series of workshops. In total there were 154 responses to the survey, over 150 workshop attendees and over 900 comments were received from all engagement undertaken. This was enhanced through a more effective use of social media which was significantly developed following the first round. A HGGT Member Briefing was also held on 20 September 2021. Further detail on the consultation process and results can be found in Appendix 3.

6 Key Consultation changes

- 6.1 As a result of both rounds of consultation and the large amount of feedback received there have been several changes to the content and design of the Strategy, with further detail in Appendix 3.
- 6.2 The updated Strategy has now being simplified to incorporate a single Mode Share Objective with three principles which incorporate the former Objectives 2 (The user hierarchy) and 3 (A culture of active and sustainable travel) from the first draft Strategy. In addition, there is a further principle around accessibility and inclusion which was absent from the earlier draft versions. The number of Actions has been condensed from 8 to 5 to avoid repetition and consolidate information.
- 6.3 Significant design changes have been made to the formatting of the Strategy to improve engagement, interactivity, accessibility for use online.

7 Zero Emission Vehicles (ZEVs)

- 7.1 Greater clarity has been provided in the Strategy on the future role of ZEVs in the Garden Town after requests from Members. The market share of ZEVs is likely to increase substantially given the ban on sale of new petrol and diesel cars by 2030.
- 7.2 ZEVs are a powerful tool in the transition to a sustainable transport network and there is a clear need for additional infrastructure to support uptake. ZEVs will be particularly important to ensure that the 50% (existing town) and 40% (new Garden Communities) of journeys in the Garden Town which do not utilise active and sustainable modes have a reduced impact on the environment and society.

- 7.3 However, ZEVs are not considered sustainable within the HGGT active and sustainable transport modes definition. There are several reasons for this, although within the context of the Garden Town these following are the primary concerns:
- 7.3.1 It is essential that Developers deliver on the HGGT Principles for healthy growth and provide the financial support for active and sustainable transport services and infrastructure. Including ZEVs in the Mode Share Objective would greatly increase the risk that the financial support needed for meaningful modal shift is not provided due to overreliance on ZEVs.
 - 7.3.2 Including ZEVs as a sustainable transport mode will place a significant additional burden on highway capacity that does not align with the growth agenda supported by the HGGT Partner Councils. ZEVs do not address the issues of congestion, space and severance that can only be achieved through modal shift.
 - 7.3.3 To ensure the definition aligns with the Government's aim: "Cycling and walking will be the natural first choice for many journeys with half of all journeys in towns and cities being cycled or walked by 2030" as set out in *Gear Change, A Bold Vision for Cycling and Walking*¹.

8 Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA)

- 8.1 An EQIA has been undertaken and is attached to this report (Appendix 4). The consultation highlighted the need to include a principle on accessibility and inclusion. This change and others were taken into consideration in the final Transport Strategy now being presented and as detailed in the EQIA assessment.
- 8.2 The design and format of the Strategy has been reviewed against Shawtrust accreditation to ensure legibility and accessibility for online viewing.

9 How the HGGT Transport Strategy will be used

- 9.1 The Transport Strategy will be embedded as a material planning consideration into the masterplanning and planning processes for the new Garden Town communities, neighbourhoods and developments through ongoing work with the relevant partner Councils, site developers and planning applicants to ensure that the ambitious sustainable mode share objective, as set out, is being achieved.
- 9.2 The Transport Strategy will provide a base of evidence and best practice which will be used to inform the planning and design processes, behaviour change programmes, further evidence commissions, business plans, guidance notes etc. The evidence base that underpins

¹ [Gear change: a bold vision for cycling and walking \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://publishing.service.gov.uk)

the Transport Strategy will continue to evolve and be taken into consideration when developing transport schemes.

- 9.3 A monitoring framework will be established to ensure alignment with this Strategy. This Framework will be based on the recommendations from the HGGT Monitoring Framework Technical Note. Policies and schemes will also be monitored internally through the HGGT Board approval and oversight process. The Transport Strategy will be reviewed every three years to ensure evidence and measures are still relevant.

10 Next steps

- 10.1 There are a number of next steps for the HGGT Transport Strategy following endorsement by the HGGT Board:
- 10.2 Endorsement by District Cabinets/Executives and County Councils as a material consideration in relation to masterplanning and planning / application processes in relation to the new Garden Town communities in autumn/winter 2021
- 10.3 Given that the Transport Strategy is to be endorsed as a material consideration, it is proposed that the Partner Councils utilise the following recommendations for consistency of decision making (subject to minor alterations to satisfy their constitutional requirements). They should also consider their decision-making protocols and take steps to notify their decision in relation to the Transport Strategy on their forward plans as required.
- 10.3.1 To consider the HGGT Transport Strategy together with the accompanying appendices including the high-level programme, consultation report and equality impact assessment;
- 10.3.2 To agree that the Transport Strategy will be considered as a material planning consideration in connection with the preparation of masterplans, pre-application advice, assessing planning applications and any other development management purposes for sites within the Harlow and Gilston Garden Town;
- 10.3.3 To delegate to the [Planning Portfolio Holder/Delegate Officer] in consultation with the Director of the Garden Town to make any minor text or design amendments to the HGGT Transport Strategy prior to publication should there be necessity for clarification or changes proposed by the respective decision makers of the Partner authorities in order to ensure a consistent document.
- 10.4 Publication in early 2022
- 10.5 Post publication actions:

- 10.5.1 Ensure the Strategy is hosted on the HGGT Website and Partner District Council websites as a key material planning consideration in assessing planning applications.
- 10.5.2 Ensure the Strategy guides the masterplanning decisions for, or impacting upon, the HGGT;
- 10.5.3 Secure Public Sector funding for infrastructure and measures identified in the programme;
- 10.5.4 Maximise developer funding/contributions, without which the Strategy cannot be delivered;
- 10.5.5 Identification of resources to develop a monitoring and evaluation strategy, building on the Strategy's target.
- 10.5.6 Develop a detailed delivery plan to produce a funded and prioritised programme as part of the HGGT annual business planning for delivery of actions;
 - Consideration of details such as timescales, funding sources, delivery options, locations and priorities.
 - Alignment of principles, particularly the transport hierarchy, and speed of achieving the 50 and 60% modal share target.

HGGT Vision Assurance

I. What principles of the HGGT Vision does this seek to achieve?

The HGGT Transport Strategy seeks to support the achievement of the following HGGT Vision Principles:

- Placemaking and homes
 - P8: Responsive and distinctive design
 - P10: Healthy, safe and connected neighbourhoods and villages
- Landscape and Green Infrastructure
 - P14: Biodiversity, climate resilience and food security
- Sustainable Movement:
 - P16: Revitalising the cycle and walking network
 - P17: Changing the character of roads to streets
 - P18: Integrated transport: a viable and preferred alternative to cars
 - P19: Anticipating change and future proofing infrastructure
- Economy and regeneration

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- P21: The right work spaces, homes and community facilities
 - P23: A vibrant and resilient Town Centre for all the Garden Town

2. What steps have been taken to ensure the HGGT Vision is embedded into the project?

The HGGT Transport Strategy has undergone numerous reviews by HGGT Partner Officers and the HGGT Placeshaping and Engagement Workstream to ensure the Vision is embedded into the Strategy. Best practice and innovative examples have also been used to inform the Strategy to ensure the most ambitious and forward-thinking policies and measures have been considered and included.

