

## Agenda Item **XX**

### **HARLOW AND GILSTON GARDEN TOWN**

<b>Report to:</b>	<b>HARLOW AND GILSTON GARDEN TOWN BOARD</b>
<b>Title:</b>	<b>East of Harlow Masterplanning Guidance (EHMG) SPD</b>
<b>Date:</b>	<b>12 March 2024</b>
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<b>Enclosures:</b>	<b>Appendix 1 – East of Harlow Masterplanning Guidance SPD (EHMG) Appendix 2 – EHMG Consultation Statement</b>

## **1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

- 1.1 The HGGT Partnership agreed to produce a document for the East of Harlow site to provide masterplanning principles.
- 1.2 The aim is to provide guidance for a developer producing a masterplan for the site, to ensure the masterplan reflects the vision for the site which is shared by the HGGT partners and meets the Garden Town Vision.
- 1.3 Work on the document progressed during 2022, including regular workshops to consolidate existing information and produce principles within it, and the work was reviewed by the Quality Review Panel in November 2022.
- 1.4 In March 2023, it was agreed in principle that the document should be adopted as a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) by both Harlow Council (HDC) and Epping Forest District Council (EFDC), following the relevant governance and consultation processes. An SPD has more material planning weight than a guidance document and is subject to a more formal consultation. The HGGT partners have worked collaboratively to prepare the draft consultation version.
- 1.5 Public consultation took place between June and September 2023, and a finalised SPD has now been produced, ready for endorsement by the HGGT Board in March 2024 and subsequent adoption by both HDC and EFDC later the same month.

## **2. RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 2.1 That the Board notes the adoption version of the East of Harlow Masterplanning**

## **Guidance SPD (EHMG).**

- 2.2 That the Board notes the EHMG Consultation Statement.**
- 2.3 That the Board recommends that Harlow District Council and Epping Forest District Council should adopt the finalised EHMG.**
- 2.4 That the Board agrees that the HGGT Director, in consultation with the HGGT Board Chair, be authorised to make minor amendments to EHMG prior to adoption.**

## **3. BACKGROUND**

- 3.1 East of Harlow is one of Harlow and Gilston Garden Town's strategic sites. It sits across the Harlow District (HDC) and Epping Forest District Council (EFDC) border, with 2,600 homes proposed within Harlow and 750 homes within Epping Forest. It also includes the proposed site for the new Princess Alexandra Hospital, and is covered by Essex County Council (ECC) as the Highways Authority.
- 3.2 The masterplanning of the site has lacked sufficient progress, which could result in a potential impact on delivery timescales for homes and infrastructure on the site and, therefore, the risk increases of ad-hoc development coming forward within the masterplan area. This could, in turn, jeopardise the vision for the strategic site.
- 3.3 The decision was taken by HGGT partners to produce an 'East of Harlow Masterplanning Principles' document (which has now been renamed to become a guidance SPD). The aim is to provide guidance for a developer producing a masterplan for the site, to ensure the masterplan reflects the vision for the site which is shared by the HGGT partners and best meets the Garden Town's Vision.
- 3.4 Work on the document progressed during 2022, including regular workshops to consolidate existing information, develop a project proposal and produce a vision for the site.
- 3.5 The draft document was reviewed by the HGGT Quality Review Panel in November 2022 and this informed subsequent versions of the EHMG.
- 3.6 Both EFDC and HDC and ECC have previously worked to develop guidance for the East of Harlow masterplan area, and this work has guided development of the document.
- 3.7 The EHMG SPD builds on the existing policies/guidance for the site, including:
  - Epping Forest Local Plan (EFLP), Green Infrastructure (GI) Strategy, Sustainability Guide
  - Harlow Local Development Plan (HLDP)
  - HGGT Vision, Design Guide, Transport Strategy, Sustainability Guidance and Checklist, GI Strategy Framework

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- Essex County Council (ECC) Highways Sustainable Transport Corridor (STC) Guidance, Access Guidance and Traffic Modelling, ECC Garden Communities, ECC Planning School Places, and ECC GI Strategy

### **4. DEVELOPMENT OF THE SPD**

- 4.1 In March 2023, it was agreed that the document would be redrafted as guidance and adopted as a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) by both HDC and EFDC. This will ensure the guidance has as much planning weight as possible, as a material consideration, and will be robust to ensure the developer prepares a masterplan which reflects the visions for the site and the overall Garden Town.
- 4.2 As noted in national Planning Practice Guidance, SPDs should build upon and provide more detailed advice or guidance on existing policies in an adopted local plan. SPDs cannot introduce new policies into the local plan as they are supplementary in nature and should not add unnecessarily to the financial burdens on development. Both HDC and EFDC Officers are satisfied that these requirements are met.
- 4.3 Where an SPD is likely to have significant environmental effects that have not already have been assessed during the preparation of the relevant strategic policies, a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) may be required. However, relevant significant environmental effects were previously assessed during the preparation of the policies in the HLDP and EFLP, taking into account the criteria in the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004 (as amended) and consultation responses received at the time.

### **5. CONSULTATION ON THE DRAFT EHMG**

- 5.1 The draft EHMG was produced by Harlow and Epping Councils in accordance with the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012 (as amended) and the Councils' adopted Statement of Community Involvements.
- 5.2 The consultation period started on Monday 31 July 2023 and was due to close on Sunday 24 September 2023, but was extended by three weeks and closed on Monday 16 October 2023. The consultation was open, therefore, for a period of 11 weeks.
- 5.3 The HGGT consultation platform website hosted the SPD and allowed people to navigate the document by chapter and leave comments online. If people preferred, they could also submit comments via email or post.
- 5.4 A full schedule of comments submitted via the platform, email and post – split by SPD chapter – can be viewed in the Consultation Statement at Appendix I. This also includes Harlow and Epping Councils' joint responses to the comments.
- 5.5 The platform also hosted a survey about the SPD. There were 14 questions, 12 of which were multiple choice or similar, with two open-ended questions to allow comments. The survey results can be seen in the Consultation Statement.

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- 5.6 On Tuesday 29 August 2023, a public drop-in event was held, in conjunction with Sheering Parish Council, at Sheering Village Hall. It ran from 10am to 12pm and included a one-hour question-and-answer session with officers from Harlow and Epping Councils and Essex County Council. The event was advertised by the Parish Council and was attended by approx. 60 people.
- 5.7 On Tuesday 10 October 2023, a public event was held, in conjunction with the Churchgate Street Residents Association, at St Mary's Church in Churchgate Street. It ran from 6pm to 7pm and comprised a question-and-answer session with officers from Harlow and Epping Councils and Essex County Council. The event was advertised by the Residents Association and was attended by over 100 people.
- 5.8 Additionally, three online drop-in sessions were held online on Microsoft Teams, with officers from Harlow and Epping Councils and Essex County Council in attendance to answer questions. These sessions were held on Wednesday 30 August 2023 from 6pm to 7pm, Thursday 31 August 2023 from 2pm to 3pm and Thursday 7 September 2023 from 10am to 11am.
- 5.9 The majority of issues raised at the above sessions were similar to the main issues raised in written responses to the consultation (see below).
- 5.10 As well as the above sessions, private meetings have also taken place between land owners, their agents and officers from Harlow and Epping Councils and Essex County Council. The purpose of these was to answer questions and queries they had prior to their formal written submissions to the consultation.
- 5.11 A total of 157 people, organisations or companies responded to the consultation, either by providing comments and/or completing a survey.

## 6. ISSUES RAISED

- 6.1 A total of 157 people, organisations or companies responded to the consultation. Many respondents made similar points and the main ones are summarised in the table below, along with joint responses from Harlow and Epping Councils.
- 6.2 Specific points made via submission of comments and completion of the open-ended questions in the survey, along with joint responses from Harlow and Epping Councils, can be viewed in the Consultation Statement.
- 6.3 The table below summarises the main issues raised during the consultation, many of which required amendments to the draft SPD.

Issue	Harlow and Epping Councils' Joint Response
<b>General traffic and travel – e.g. increased congestion, bus services, etc.</b>	The HGGT Transport Strategy, STC (which will connect to the new hospital) and associated modal shift/change are key strands of the HGGT vision to address potential increased vehicular movements arising from new development.

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	<p>Buses on the STC would be funded by the development initially and it is expected they will become self-funding as the development grows. These buses would also benefit the residents of Newhall (and other existing Harlow residents along the route) by providing a fast and reliable bus service to both the town centre and beyond and also the new hospital site.</p> <p>Modal shift/change is about offering a choice for short car journeys to be completed using sustainable transport instead, thereby reducing the number of cars on the road overall. The intention is not to remove cars but provide worthwhile choice in how people travel so that sustainable choices can be made especially for those journeys where walking, cycling and using public transport is easier, cheaper and quicker than sitting in traffic in the car.</p> <p>The Garden Community is predicted on being a sustainable development and as such people will purchase properties in this knowledge and developers will be aware of this requirement. With multiple accesses onto Gilden Way, traffic will either be able to access towards the town centre and access the wider area or leave via J7a and then return. Since the development of Church Langley over 20 years ago, much has changed and sustainable transport has become much more a choice for many than in the early 90s.</p> <p>The allocation of the site has been informed by transport assessment evidence and further detailed transport assessments will be carried out by the developer.</p> <p>The HGGT IDP identifies what schemes and proposals are required including those related to the highway network to accommodate growth.</p>
<b>M11 J7a</b>	<p>M11 J7a was designed to provide the second access to Harlow and therefore helps to provide relief if either J7 gets blocked for any reason and vice versa.</p> <p>The road has been designed with enough capacity to deal with traffic associated with the new development and this is supported by modelling.</p>
<b>Traffic associated with hospital relocation</b>	<p>The impact of the hospital is not as significant as a totally new development as it is a relocation. Being close to the M11 means that traffic which previously came from the M11 to access the hospital can in future do so without traversing the town to get there.</p>
<b>London Road closure</b>	<p>It was a requirement of the Newhall Section 106 agreement that there must be suitable secondary access to Newhall and contributions towards improvements across the Harlow road network.</p> <p>An application was approved in 2017 for the secondary Newhall access arrangement and Bus Gate proposals. The reference number for this application is HW/FUL/17/00130. The officers report and planning statement produced by the developer provides information on why the bus gate is to be implemented.</p>
<b>Churchgate Street traffic</b>	<p>Development traffic would not be allowed to use routes through Churchgate Street and developers would be expected to a construction plan to show how they would bring the site forward. Text in SPD amended for clarification.</p> <p>Access to all the roads within Churchgate Street from routes travelling through the new development would only facilitate walking and cycling access, i.e. would be for walking and cycling only. Text in SPD amended for clarification.</p>

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<p><b>Possibility of increased flood risk</b></p>	<p>SuDS, including new ponds and swales, are likely to help with any future flooding. The improvements to Gilden Park area helped with flooding because the underpass, for example, now floods less.</p> <p>Churchgate Street area flooding this year was as a result of a very intense and short period of rain that impacted on the local brook within a known flood zone area (as per EA maps). This is with EA to decide whether further work/what work is required. The assessments for flooding considered future events. As part of the masterplan and eventual planning application, further flood risks will be required to be considered.</p> <p>The assessments for flooding considered future events. As part of the masterplan and eventual planning application, further flood risks will be required to be considered.</p>
<p><b>Provision of suitable infrastructure</b></p>	<p>The site will be supported by the right infrastructure in the right location including health, education, sustainable transport, access and highway improvements and all utility provision. This is set out in the HGGT Infrastructure Delivery Plan.</p> <p>Infrastructure will have to be provided in a phased approach based on the occupation of dwellings once they are completed. However, it is not appropriate for the SPD to provide detail on phasing of housing and phasing of infrastructure provision - this will come at the masterplan stage in detailed discussion with infrastructure providers.</p> <p>The SPD will be amended to ensure there is specific reference to the need for Local Centres to include community infrastructure such as preschool provision, doctors, dentist, play areas, and community rooms for use for faith activities, toddler groups, support groups, etc.</p> <p>The HGGT partners and developers will work with utility providers on water provision and are aware of the development sites in this area through the Local Plan process.</p>
<p><b>Locations of new schools</b></p>	<p>The exact locations of the schools have yet to be established and are indicative in the SPD. Essex County Council will be providing further evidence and justification for the best location. The SPD will therefore be amended to remove the school options and state that locations are to be decided.</p>
<p><b>Ensuring developers adhere to Section 106 agreements for infrastructure provision</b></p>	<p>The adherence to S106 agreements is not something for this SPD to address, but the Council's legal action against the developers at Gilden Park is likely to set an important precedent which will help to ensure developers adhere to planned delivery of infrastructure in the future.</p>
<p><b>Need for housing at this location</b></p>	<p>The East of Harlow site was allocated for housing and associated ancillary uses in the Harlow and Epping Local Plans, which went through rigorous rounds of consultation, public examination and inspection by government.</p> <p>The south-east of the UK has some of the highest house prices in the country due to high demand and lack of supply. Issues such as people living longer than previous generations, higher rates of divorce in older people (resulting in a divorced couple requiring two homes instead of one), and birth rates historically being higher than death rates, has increased demand.</p> <p>The need for housing - including affordable housing - is detailed further in the evidence base supporting the Harlow and Epping Local Plans.</p>
<p><b>Landscape, biodiversity and farmland concerns</b></p>	<p>The SPD requires the masterplan to be landscape-led, ensuring that open spaces and Green infrastructure are provided, while respecting and preserving the original</p>

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	<p>landscape as much as possible. This also includes a mandatory net increase in biodiversity.</p> <p>Most of the farmland in question is Grade 3, meaning it is Good to Moderate and therefore not the best (which would be Grades 1 and 2). Around 70% of UK land is farmland. It was accepted at the examinations for the Harlow and Epping Local Plans, which allocated this site, that the loss of farmland is, on balance, acceptable in order for the districts to meet their identified housing targets.</p>
<b>Impact on existing communities, particularly Sheering</b>	<p>The SPD requires the masterplan to sensitively consider existing communities.</p> <p>The SPD indicates that the masterplan will require a substantial buffer between the northern part of the site and Sheering to ensure coalescence is prevented and that Sheering retains its identity.</p> <p>It is possible that improvements to existing Sheering infrastructure will be part of the East of Harlow development, but this will be determined at the masterplanning and planning application stages.</p>
<b>Clarity of maps</b>	<p>The maps will be significantly altered prior to the final version of the SPD being produced, including adding OS base maps and names of existing settlements and road names.</p>
<b>Online platform</b>	<p>The Councils were aware of some technical issues with the online platform and liaised directly with those affected to resolve the matters. Feedback has been passed to the platform supplier to avoid future issues.</p>

6.4. Additionally, a number of comments were received from statutory consultees and land owners (via their agents). Their details can be found in the Consultation Statement.

6.5. The table below details how the SPD has been amended as a result of comments from these consultees:

<b>Topic</b>	<b>Amendment</b>
<b>Green &amp; Blue Infrastructure</b>	<p>Improved/additional references to role of GI in relation to climate change, blue infrastructure and the possibility for new water bodies, greening of local centres, SANG guidance, linkages with the surrounding landscape to improve and encourage access, consideration of “green” routes, guidance on provision of sports facilities, HGGT GI Framework action plans, wider uses of GI, tree and hedgerow retention, SFRA and flooding strategies, and waterway restoration and enhancement.</p> <p>Maps amended so that the area in the north of the site is referred to as a green buffer rather than for a specific SANG/BNG use.</p>
<b>Infrastructure</b>	<p>Improved/additional references to utilities infrastructure, need for developers to engage with water/wastewater bodies to ensure requirements are met, effects of development on emergency services, and the need for local centres to include a wide range of facilities such as GP healthcare, dentist, play areas and community rooms for faith activities, fitness activities, toddler groups, support groups, etc.</p> <p>Clarification that road capacity on the local and strategic networks is not intended to be prioritised by health facilities uses over residential uses.</p>
<b>Sustainable Movement</b>	<p>Improved/additional references to possibility of a cycling route through the green buffer towards Sheering, interim measures for sustainable modes and in particular for PAH, connection of PAH with sustainable transport network,</p>



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	establishing GI in sustainable transport and PRow networks, effects on waterways/flooding arising from new roads or crossings Removal of reference to Campions roundabout regarding dwelling occupation.
<b>Education</b>	Improved/additional references to role of schools in meeting the community sports facility needs, primary school playing field being multi-purpose and opportunities for natural play. Removal of school options as these will need further consideration at the masterplanning stage.
<b>General</b>	Amendments to ensure the SPD is not overly prescriptive. Improved/additional references to Section 106 requirements, Essex Design Guide, climate change and stewardship. Amendments to maps to improve clarity and address points raised by consultees.

6.7. There are greater details of amendments in the full schedules of comments and the Councils' responses at Appendices 5 and 6 (separate documents).

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## HGGT Vision Assurance

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

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

### Placemaking and Homes

- o Responsive and distinctive
- o Balanced, diverse and functional communities
- o Healthy, safe and connected neighbourhoods and villages
- o Maximising visibility and appreciation of our heritage

### Landscape and Green Infrastructure

- o Enhancing the Green Belt and expanding the Green Wedge network
- o Landscape-led masterplanning
- o Designing in biodiversity, climate resilience and food security
- o Making best use of technology in energy generation and conservation

### Sustainable Movement

- o Revitalising the cycle and walking network
- o Changing the character of roads to streets
- o Integrated transport: a viable and preferred alternative to cars to achieve a modal shift
- o Anticipating change and future proofing infrastructure

### Economy and regeneration

- o The right work spaces, homes and community facilities
- o A diverse employment base and skilled labour supply
- o A vibrant and resilient Town Centre for all the Garden Town

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



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The EHMG has undergone numerous reviews by HGGT Partner Officers, as well as the Quality Review Panel, to ensure the Vision is embedded. The Vision was one of the core documents that formed the production of the EHMG.

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