

East Herts Council Report

Executive

Date of meeting: Tuesday 13 February 2024

Report by: Councillor Ben Crystall– Leader of the Council

Report title: Harlow and Gilston Garden Town: Infrastructure Delivery Plan Review

Ward(s) affected: Great Amwell and Stansteads; Hunsdon; Much Hadham; Sawbridgeworth;

Summary – The Harlow and Gilston Garden Town (HGGT) Infrastructure Delivery Plan (IDP) is a document setting out the required infrastructure to support the delivery of the development which comprises the Garden Town. The HGGT IDP was initially published in 2019. The document can only ever comprise a ‘snapshot in time’ of the infrastructure requirements as a range of factors associated with it will continue to evolve, for example costs, funding streams, the scale and scope of development proposals etc.

As a result, the IDP will become less relevant and accurate over time if it is not reviewed and brought up to date. A review process has now been undertaken and the revised and updated HGGT IDP has been endorsed by the HGGT Board. This report seeks approval of East Herts Council, as one of the Garden Town partner Councils, of the 2023 version of the HGGT IDP to form part of the evidence base for the consideration of master plans, pre-application consideration, planning application consideration and in relation to all other relevant development management processes in relation to the Garden Town.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR Council:

- a) That Council approve the HGGT IDP 2023 to form part of the evidence base for the consideration of master plans, pre-application consideration, planning application consideration and in relation to all other relevant development management processes in relation to the Garden Town.

1.0 Proposal(s)

- 1.1 That Executive agree to recommend to Council that the HGGT IDP 2023 is approved to form part of the evidence base for the consideration of master plans, pre-application consideration, planning application consideration and in relation to all other relevant development management processes in relation to the Garden Town.

2.0 Background

- 2.1 The HGGT IDP sets out details of the infrastructure required to support the delivery of the growth planned for the Harlow and Gilston Garden Town. The revised and updated IDP is attached as Appendix 1 to this report. At Appendix 2 is the Schedule to the IDP. The Schedule sets out in detail the funding to be sought or the infrastructure to be delivered associated with each of the Garden Town development sites. The IDP covers the full range of infrastructure including transport, education, health facilities, community facilities, open spaces, sport and leisure etc. The IDP was initially prepared and published in 2019.
- 2.2 The IDP can only ever be a 'snapshot in time' as the background to the information it contains will continually change. For example, the costs of infrastructure schemes will become

refined and more clearly established, funding sources will be identified and delivery, as a result of development, will crystallise.

- 2.3 Given this continually evolving background, it is appropriate to review the IDP periodically to ensure that it remains up to date and relevant. It is the main evidence base on which the Garden Town partners will seek direct delivery of infrastructure, or contributions towards it, from the landowners and developers who bring forward the development proposals comprising parts of the Garden Town. The version of the document for which approval is now sought is an update prepared during 2022 and 2023. It brings up to date the information contained in the IDP.

3.0 Reason(s)

- 3.1 As indicated above, the IDP forms the primary evidence base on which the Garden Town partners, including East Herts in its role as Local Planning Authority, seek the delivery of infrastructure as part of development coming forward. The development which comprises Garden Town delivery in East Herts is, of course, the development proposed for the Gilston Area.
- 3.2 Members will be aware that proposals for the Gilston Area are well advanced. Full planning application proposals for enhanced transport infrastructure connecting the Gilston Area development sites to Harlow and its services and facilities, were approved by the Development Management Committee (DMC) in early 2022. Proposals for the residential development in outline form (for 10,000 new homes and supporting infrastructure) were considered by the DMC in Feb and March 2023. The committee resolved to grant outline planning

permission subject to a range of conditions and the resolution of a s106 Planning Obligation Agreement.

- 3.3 As a result of the progress made in relation to the Gilston Area planning applications, the infrastructure that is to be delivered associated with them is largely established at this point of time. The IDP, as reviewed over the last year, reflects this and has been updated to accord with the details of the planning application proposals and as set out in the heads of terms of the s106 Agreement that were considered by the DMC in early 2023.
- 3.4 Whilst the position for the Gilston Area is largely established, it remains important for the Council, as the Local Planning Authority, to agree and endorse the review of the IDP. This is because circumstances may change in the future, further planning application proposals may come forward, funding scenarios around the delivery of infrastructure may change and the Gilston Area proposals are to be subject to viability reassessment during the course of their delivery. It is also important as the delivery of infrastructure coming forward associated with other Garden Town developments, beyond Gilston, ensure that the Garden Town is comprehensively delivered. Whilst beyond the Gilston site, this infrastructure will support the lives of those who live in the Gilston Area in due course.
- 3.5 The revisions to the IDP take account of changes that have occurred since the initial version that was published in 2019. In that respect these include:
- bringing up to date the cost base of infrastructure, either on the basis of more refined costings or as a result of general inflationary cost increases;

- the refinement to the extent of infrastructure to be sought associated with the development. In particular, in that respect, following the position in similar cases across the country, the decision has been made not to seek financial contributions toward acute healthcare provision as part of development. Contributions toward, or the direct provision of primary healthcare (GP services) will still be sought;
- as indicated, in relation to the Gilston Area, the extent to which the development proposals can enable the delivery of infrastructure have been thoroughly tested through the viability assessment of the proposals. The outcome of this has informed the reviewed IDP.

3.6 The revised and updated IDP was considered by the Garden Town partners at the 12 September 2023 meeting of the Garden Town Board. The Board endorsed the revised an updated document and requested that all Garden Town partners now be asked to likewise approve the document. Given the importance of the IDP, it is recommended therefore that Executive agree to recommend to Council that the IDP be approved as part of the Garden Town evidence base.

4.0 Options

4.1 The alternative to the recommended option is to determine not to approve the reviewed IDP. This option is not ***recommended as:***

- it will leave the Council as the Local Planning Authority without an up to date evidence base, should new or revised proposals come forward for the Gilston Area or when viability reassessment is undertaken;
- it would reduce cohesion between the Garden Town partners, reducing the ability of the partners to secure appropriate

infrastructure across the rest of the Garden Town area. Whilst located outside of the Gilston Area, much of this infrastructure will support the lives of those who come to live in the Gilston Area.

5.0 Risks

5.1 Risks associated with agreeing to the publication of the reviewed and updated IDP are considered to be minimal. As indicated, an HGGT IDP is already in place. This review brings that IDP up to date as of 2023. Whilst infrastructure delivery in relation to the Gilston Area is largely established, an agreed revised IDP will reduce any risks should any revision to the development proposals come forward and through the viability reassessment process.

6.0 Implications/Consultations

Community Safety

Yes – positive impact in that the IDP supports the delivery of community infrastructure.

Data Protection

No

Equalities

No

Environmental Sustainability

Yes – positive impact in that the IDP supports the delivery of green spaces, landscaping, water management and biodiversity.

Financial

Yes – positive impact in that the IDP assists in securing financial contribution toward or the direct delivery of infrastructure.

Health and Safety

No

Human Resources

No

Human Rights

No

Legal

Yes – positive impact in that the IDP supports infrastructure to be secured through s106 Planning Obligation Agreements.

Specific Wards

Yes – Hunsdon, Sawbridgeworth, Much Hadham, Great Amwell and Stansteads

7.0 Background papers, appendices and other relevant material

7.1 The HGGT IDP recommended to be agreed is attached at Appendix 1 and the Schedule as Appendix 2

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