

East Herts Council

Council

Date of Meeting: 13 May 2020

Report by: Cllr Linda Haysey, Leader of the Council

Report title: Harlow and Gilston Garden Town
Employment Commission Report, Hardisty
Jones Associates (2020)

Ward(s) affected: Hunsdon, Much Hadham, Sawbridgeworth &
Stanstead Abbots

Summary

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR COUNCIL that:

(a) The 'draft final' Harlow and Gilston Garden Town Employment Commission Report, as detailed at Appendix A to this report, be agreed as a material consideration for Development Management purposes.

(b) Authority be delegated to the Head of Communications, Strategy and Policy to agree the final version of the Harlow and Gilston Garden Town Employment Commission Report, in consultation with the Leader, following any further changes made to the Report.

1.0 Proposal

1.1 That the Executive, having considered the report by emailed circulation (the Executive meeting of 21 April 2020 having been cancelled due to the coronavirus situation), recommends to Council that the findings and recommendations of the Harlow and Gilston Garden Town Employment Commission Report by Hardisty Jones Associates 2020, be treated as a material consideration in the assessment of the planning applications relating to the Gilston Area.

2.0 Background

2.1 Two studies have previously been conducted into the employment land requirements of the West Essex East Herts FEMA¹ (Hardisty Jones 2015 and 2017) which modelled the projected housing growth and the minimum hectarage requirement of employment land area to maintain a sustainable local economy. The second study was an update of the first in the light of increased housing target and recent economic data. What these reports didn't address were the business type uses, floorspace requirements or where they should be located across the FEMA area.

2.2 The methodology of the studies are as follows:
The FEMA is roughly in 'balance' at present. People commute into and out of it, but broadly speaking the number of jobs equates to the number of residents of working age. If more houses are built, the number of residents of working age will increase. Therefore, to compensate, space must be found for new businesses to employ those people to maintain the balance.

2.3 Traditionally, this would be calculated using a square

¹ Functional Economic Market Area covering East Herts, Uttlesford, Harlow and Epping Forest Districts

metre requirement per working-age person (which would vary according to business use type). In simplistic terms, the study would extrapolate the floorspace requirement in the existing business-use mix ratios in the area to the extent that the number of new employees could be catered for. This floorspace was then converted to site area hectareage often using a 40% building to land conversion density ratio to allow for parking and other curtilage. These hectareage were then allocated to specific sites in the District/Local Plans.

- 2.4 However, the studies did not directly address the specific sustainability requirements of the Garden Town in terms of employment and land use, as they predated the work relating to the objectives and vision for the Garden Town.
- 2.5 Each of the three Garden Town Partner Districts² is at a different stage in their Local Plan processes and it was considered that although the Plans allocate new employment land to particular sites, there was no overall masterplan as to where, how or with what uses the Garden Town's employment land should be deployed nor any comprehensive, systematic guidance to an underlying vision, rationale and methodology.

The Report (See Appendix A)

- 2.6 The Harlow and Gilston Garden Town team considered that addressing this matter more specifically would provide a more robust position in relation to securing employment related development as part of the planning application proposals coming forward.
- 2.7 Therefore jointly and on behalf of the partner Councils, the Garden Town commissioned a third report (which

² Partner Councils are East Herts, Epping Forest and Harlow District Councils, Hertfordshire and Essex County Councils.

Hardisty Jones was appointed to produce) specifically relating to the employment requirements of the Garden Town, but within the wider context of the West Essex and East Herts FEMA and the Innovation Corridor (LSCC³). This would detail a more specific outline of the types of employment space that should be catered for, where, and the amount of floorspace required within each of the allocated Garden Town development sites and elsewhere in Harlow.

- 2.8 The final draft report was completed in March 2020, and a copy is available to view at Appendix A. The report details the parameters relating to employment land in the Garden Town as listed in 2.7 above, both within and beyond the current East Herts District Plan period.
- 2.9 It incorporates anticipated changes in working patterns and improvements in technology and the Transport Strategy aspirations for the Garden Town. This seeks to limit the need for travel and provide jobs, services and facilities close to where people will live. In this way, the Report indicates how the seven village developments proposed as part of the Gilston area development should be designed to operate as sustainable communities and as part of the Garden Town. Furthermore, it indicates the employment land densities of development that would be acceptable to the Partner Councils.
- 2.10 At officer level, all Councils are in agreement with the outputs. East Herts is the first to seek formal endorsement as a result of the timescale requirements of the planning applications in the Gilston area.
- 2.11 As a final draft, it is possible that changes could be made to the final version. Recommendation (b) above proposes that power to agree any further changes be delegated to the Head of Communications, Strategy and Policy in consultation with the Member for Planning and

³ London Stansted Cambridge Corridor

Growth

2.12 The main findings relating to Gilston are summarised below. However, these should be read in the context of the Executive Summary and then ideally the Report itself (see Appendix A) to give a balanced understanding of the methodology employed.

- The Garden Town population will rise from 80,000 in 2011, to 120,000 by 2033 and 135,000 in the period beyond.
- The requirement for jobs will rise from 40,000 to 60,000 by 2033 and then to about 70,000 post 2033.
- There is a requirement in the Garden Town for 25-29 hectares of employment land to 2033. 27h have been allocated and should be sufficient if they are all realised including most of the 5h at Gilston.
- Village or neighbourhood centres in the Garden Town must have sufficient employment space to enable them to be viable and sustainable in the long term.
- The allocation of and use of employment land must adhere to the Vision and Principles of the Garden Town.
- In Gilston, a minimum of 20,000m² of B class use floorspace must be made available to 2033 with the ultimate aim of achieving 34,000m² in total, beyond 2033.
- The regeneration and transformation of the Garden Town Centre is essential to support the Vision of the Garden Town.
- Strong leadership is required to drive through transformational change sought.

3.0 Reason(s)

3.1 Planning applications for development from the two

main landowners at Gilston have now been received. These proposals are in outline form and include the provision of land for employment purposes. However, they do not deliver the amounts of employment floorspace set out above.

- 3.2 Given the Garden Town Vision and the sustainable development objectives that the Council has for the village centres, it is vital that sufficient employment land is provided in the schemes to ensure the resulting development maximizes its potential to operate sustainably. Endorsement of the findings of the Employment Commission Report will bolster efforts to ensure that sufficient space is set aside to provide both local services and employment.
- 3.3 The other two Local Planning Authority Council partners in the Garden Town (Harlow and Epping Forest) will also endorse the finding of the report following the timetable of their own Local Plans.

4.0 Options

- 4.1 The Council chooses to endorse, to not endorse or make no comment on the Employment Commission Report.

5.0 Risks

- 5.1 If the Council fails to endorse or comment on the Employment Commission Report, it will be assigned less weight as a material consideration when assessing planning applications. Developers may take it as a sign of a lack of democratic support for the planning case for employment land.
- 5.2 By applying a coherent and consistent methodology across the Garden Town endorsed by the Partner Councils, the Employment Commission Report will be used as a material consideration in making the case for

the full allocation of employment land in the Garden Town Gilston and elsewhere.

6.0 Implications/Consultations

6.1 None.

Community Safety

No

Data Protection

No

Equalities

No

Environmental Sustainability

No

Financial

No

Health and Safety

No

Human Resources

No

Human Rights

No

Legal

No

Specific Wards

Yes – although the Report relates to the Harlow and Gilston Garden Town and for East Herts, the Gilston element of that, the wards

affected directly and indirectly are Hunsdon, Much Hadham, Sawbridgeworth and Stanstead Abbots.

7.0 Background papers, appendices and other relevant material

7.1 Appendix 1 – The Harlow and Gilston Garden Town
Employment Commission Report by Hardisty Jones 2020

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