

East Herts Council Report

Executive Meeting

Date of meeting: Tuesday 11 July 2023

Report by: Councillor Ben Crystall – Leader of the Council

Report title: Harlow and Gilston Garden Town - Draft Stewardship Charter for Consultation

Ward(s) affected: Hunsdon; Sawbridgeworth

Summary

- Ensuring that adequate and appropriate stewardship arrangements are in place is a key requirement underpinning the success of delivery and growth as part of the Harlow and Gilston Garden Town. Successful stewardship supports the achievement of equitable and inclusive development with new communities feeling empowered to take control over the future operation and management of assets delivered locally. Garden Town partners have drawn on their collective experience to draft a Stewardship Charter, which sets out the six key principles which are seen as requirements for successful stewardship. The Charter is in draft form and is now at an appropriate stage in its development where it should be subject to wide stakeholder consultation. This report seeks the agreement of the Executive, on behalf of East Herts Council as one of the Garden Town partners, to proceed with that consultation exercise.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR EXECUTIVE:

- (A) That the draft Harlow and Gilston Garden Town Stewardship Charter be approved for consultation**

1.0 Proposal(s)

- 1.1 That the draft Harlow and Gilston Garden Town Stewardship Charter (attached as **Appendix A**) is approved to allow consultation to commence

2.0 Background

- 2.1 The Harlow and Gilston Garden Town (HGGT) comprises the delivery of significant growth in and around the town of Harlow. As part of this, in East Herts, land has been allocated for the delivery of 10,000 new homes in the Gilston Area. The Councils Development Management Committee (DMC) resolved to grant outline planning permission for these proposals at its meetings of 28 February 2023 (the application for 8,500 new homes by Places for People) and 23 March 2023 (the application for 1,500 new homes by Taylor Wimpey).
- 2.2 In addition to the new homes to be delivered in the Garden Town, it is anticipated that a range of social and community infrastructure will also be delivered. This includes transport facilities and new schools, but will also include community meeting spaces, parks, play areas, green spaces, sports facilities and areas for ecology and biodiversity.
- 2.3 The delivery of wide ranging infrastructure aligns with the aspirations that the HGGT Council partners¹ have in relation to the new places that will be created. These aspirations are set out in the HGGT Vision, that was agreed and published by the Garden Town partners in 2018.
- 2.4 A key element of the Vision for the Garden Town is that equitable, resilient and robust stewardship arrangements are put in place to manage and maintain assets delivered as part of the development and which are not transferred into

¹ East Herts DC, Epping Forest DC, Essex CC, Harlow DC and Hertfordshire CC

traditional management organisation (such as this Council, for example). Indeed the general approach over recent years, because of resource and capacity constraints, has seen the Council being less likely to be the willing recipient of such assets.

- 2.5 As above, these assets will include green spaces, play areas, parks, land for biodiversity and ecology. They are also likely to comprise areas for drainage, wetland, roads and potentially buildings which can generate an income for the stewardship body through occupier and usage charges.
- 2.6 As they are the most advanced, in terms of development coming forward in the Garden Town, the landowners and applicants of land in the Gilston Area, are already actively considering stewardship proposals for their site. This work has been led by Places for People (PfP) who are the owner of the majority of the land in the Gilston Area and sufficient for the delivery of 8,500 new homes.
- 2.7 Members will be aware that, as part of the allocation of land in the Gilston Area for development in the East Herts District Plan, substantial land was identified to be made available as managed open space and parklands (policy GA2). This is the land located to the north and west of the high voltage electricity pylons crossing the Gilston site and is as shown on Fig 11.2 of the District Plan.
- 2.8 PfP are in support of this requirement and their emerging stewardship proposals set out how that land, other land within the allocation area that is to remain undeveloped and other assets would be dealt with.
- 2.9 At this stage, the proposals have developed as far as the Heads of Terms of the s106 Agreement, which are now to be included as a fully detailed s106 Schedule to enable the

planning permissions, which the DMC resolved to grant at its meetings of 28 February and 23 March 2023, to be released. The Heads of Terms set out the main actions to be undertaken to secure acceptable stewardship in the Gilston Area.

3.0 Reason(s)

- 3.1 The Garden Town comprises the delivery of 23,000 new homes in the period of the current Local Plans for the Garden Town partner Local Planning Authorities (LPAs) and beyond. It includes the planned new communities in the Gilston Area, but also new development to the east, south and west of Harlow both within Harlow and Epping Forest Districts. The whole of the existing town of Harlow comprises part of the Garden Town and there are proposals for extensive development and regeneration both within the town centre and at other locations across the town.
- 3.2 As a result, the Garden Town partners have considered that it is appropriate to set out their own expectations in relation to stewardship, to ensure that suitable and adequate stewardship arrangements are implemented at sites across the Garden Town. This has resulted in the creation of the draft Garden Town Stewardship Charter.
- 3.3 The Charter has been drafted by Garden Town officers, based on their experience of the emerging proposals at Gilston, but also drawing on experiences and information provided through the development of other Garden Town sites. It has been introduced to the Garden Town site landowners, at a Developer Forum event in Feb 23, and has been subject to scrutiny by the Garden Town Quality Review Panel (QRP).
- 3.4 The QRP is a Panel of experts in the planning and development field which is convened independently on behalf of the Garden Town partners and can be asked to review

emerging policy documents and development proposals. The QRP is supportive of the Charter work and has suggested wording amendments and other actions that can be undertaken to strengthen its impact. These recommended amendments will be built in to an updated version of the Charter, alongside other changes as a result of the feedback received during the proposed consultation exercise.

- 3.5 As indicated, it is now appropriate to ensure that there is consultation and engagement with wider stakeholders and this report follows the agreement of the Garden Town Board, at its meeting of 13 June 2023, to undertake that consultation process.
- 3.6 Given the informal decision making nature of the Garden Town Board, it is necessary to have separate agreement in place from all partner authorities to undertake consultation. This report therefore seeks to establish that agreement on behalf of East Herts Council.
- 3.7 A detailed consultation and engagement plan is in preparation that sets out arrangements for online and in person engagement with a range of stakeholders including Parish Councils, other community groups (including the Hunsdon, Eastwick and Gilston Neighbourhood Plan Group), young person engagement and with landowners/ applicants/ developers.
- 3.8 The Garden Town partners social media platform will carry details of the consultation arrangements and website and press release content will be prepared. Hard copy documents will be made available for those who prefer to access documents and return feedback in that form. It has also been confirmed that an online consultation platform, which will support other Garden Town consultation exercises in future,

will also be available.

4.0 Options

4.1 The only alternative option would be for the Council not to approve the commencement of a consultation exercise in relation to the draft Charter. If there is any concern with the content of the draft document such that consultation should not proceed, officers can, of course, seek to secure the appropriate amendments, subject to agreement with the Garden Town partners. The main impact of this course would be a delay in the commencement of consultation and the progression of the document.

5.0 Risks

5.1 Risks of proceeding to consultation on the draft Stewardship Charter document are limited. Any concerns that are raised during the consultation can be considered and addressed before deciding to further proceed with the document.

6.0 Implications/Consultations

Community Safety

Yes and positive in that adequate and acceptable stewardship arrangements support the delivery and ongoing effective use and operation of community assets

Data Protection

No

Equalities

No negative impact

Environmental Sustainability

Yes and positive in that adequate and acceptable stewardship arrangements will ensure the effective care of land and spaces managed for ecological and biodiversity purposes.

Financial

No direct impact, but stewardship arrangements that are adopted have the potential for financial implications over the longer term.

Health and Safety

None

Human Resources

None

Human Rights

None

Legal

No direct impact. Stewardship arrangements will require appropriate legal and governance structures to be in place.

Specific Wards

Yes – Hunsdon and Sawbridgeworth

7.0 Background papers, appendices and other relevant material

7.1 None in addition to the draft Stewardship Charter

Contact Member

Councillor Ben Crystall, Leader of the Council
ben.crystall@eastherts.gov.uk

Contact Officer

Sara Saunders, Head of Planning and Building Control,

Tel: 01992 531656. sara.saunders@eastherts.gov.uk

Report Author

Kevin Steptoe, East Herts Garden Town Lead Officer,

Tel: 07739 285526. kevin.steptoe@eastherts.gov.uk