

East Herts Council Non-Key Decision Report

Date: 6 September 2023

Report by: Councillor Ben Crystall – Leader of the Council

Report title: Harlow and Gilston Garden Town – Green Infrastructure Framework

Ward(s) affected: Hunsdon

Summary

- Following work undertaken by Hertfordshire and Essex County Councils, the Harlow and Gilston Garden Town (HGGT) Partners¹ commissioned the preparation of a Green Infrastructure Framework (the 'Framework') for the Garden Town. This work was completed in the early part of the current year and was reported to the HGGT Board in February 2023. Following further minor amendment to the Framework, subsequent to the HGGT Board, the Framework can now be considered for agreement by East Herts Council

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR DECISION: That:

(A) The HGGT Green Infrastructure Framework be agreed as an HGGT technical document

1.0 Proposal(s)

1.1 That the Framework be agreed as an HGGT technical document, relevant to the Gilston Area of East Herts as part of

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

the HGGT.

2.0 Background

- 2.1 Green Infrastructure (GI) of appropriate extent and quality is an essential element of the proposals for the HGGT. The Garden Town Vision is based on the Garden City Principles, developed by the Town and Country Planning Association, which require the delivery of appropriate Green Infrastructure alongside new built development.
- 2.2 GI comprises green spaces, parks and parklands, land for ecology and biodiversity, watercourses and wetlands that are managed to optimise objectives in relation to public access, recreation and the improvement and enhancement of biodiversity.
- 2.3 Hertfordshire and Essex County Councils have taken a lead role in this part of the country in relation to GI. Strategic GI networks are often extensive in scale, spanning across individual District Council boundaries. The County Councils also have statutory responsibilities in relation to the development of Local Nature Recovery Strategies (LNRS) with a strong relationship to land managed for ecology and biodiversity purposes. Both Hertfordshire and Essex have previously undertaken GI studies across their areas.

3.0 The HGGT Green Infrastructure Framework

- 3.1 The Harlow and Gilston GI Framework brings the work previously undertaken separately into one place for the benefit of the Garden Town stakeholders. These include the existing and new communities as they emerge, and the owners, promoters and developers of land. The Garden Town partners commissioned Land Use Consultants (LUC) to undertake this work. The Framework document, in two parts

and supported by Appendices A – J can be found as an **Appendix** to this report.

- 3.2 Whilst not a formal planning policy document, in bringing together the existing GI information for the Garden Town, some visioning work has been undertaken to identify the potential and opportunities to enhance GI across the Garden Town.
- 3.3 As a result, the Framework identifies a range of strategic opportunities, 17 in total. These include the protection and enhancement of existing GI assets and the creation of new ones, as the development of the Garden Town progresses. In the East Herts area, these are largely allied to the proposals being developed by the owners of the land in the Gilston Area. They include the protection and enhancement of the river Stort and its tributaries, the revitalisation of holloways, the creation of parklands and the potential for sustainable and regenerative farming to be implemented on land to remain undeveloped.
- 3.4 The Framework concludes with the identification of seven possible Action Plans through which the opportunities referred to above could be brought forward.
- 3.5 At this stage, the Garden Town partners collectively have taken no decisions in relation to the potential Action Plans. It is anticipated that officers will have regard to them in the context of the development of the Garden Town sites (including the Gilston Area) and will look to highlight their potential and opportunity with landowners and developers through development processes – master plans, planning applications, land stewardship etc.
- 3.6 At present then, following agreement by the HGGT Board of the Framework as a technical background document, the same

agreement is being requested from partners individually. This report therefore is to establish the agreement of East Herts Council to the Framework as a technical background document relevant to the Gilston Area in East Herts as part of the Garden Town.

4.0 Options

- 4.1 The Council has the option no to agree to the Framework. There would not appear to be any basis for not agreeing to the Framework, given the that it identifies and supports positive outcomes in relation to landscape, recreation, ecology and biodiversity matters. The implications of such an option are likely that the Council would be seen as not supporting these outcomes or not supporting the delivery of them through the Garden Town.

5.0 Risks

- 5.1 The risks of agreement to the Framework, as recommended in this report, are considered to be minimal. As indicated, the Framework brings together work previously undertaken elsewhere and, whilst there is an element of visioning and recommendation in relation to future work (the Action Plans) the Council is taking no active decision in relation to them at this stage.
- 5.2 There is no commitment to further action or resources as a result of this decision. As indicated, officers will draw on the content of the Framework through development work which will be undertaken in any event through the planning process.

6.0 Implications/Consultations

- 6.1 No negative implications

Community Safety

Positive – the Framework is allied to the delivery of good quality and healthy new places with Green Infrastructure generally considered to be a positive asset for communities and the health of residents.

Data Protection

None

Equalities

None

Environmental Sustainability

Positive – the Framework supports the creation and maintenance of land and spaces for ecological and biodiversity purposes.

Financial

None

Health and Safety

None

Human Resources

None

Human Rights

None

Legal

None

Specific Wards

The Framework is relevant for the **Hunsdon ward** as the location of the Gilston Area allocation as part of the HGGT.

7.0 Background papers, appendices and other relevant material

Appendix 1 – the HGGT Green Infrastructure Framework (in two parts) and supporting appendices

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