

Agenda Item 9

Report to: HARLOW AND GILSTON GARDEN TOWN JOINT COMMITTEE

Title: Harlow & Gilston Garden Town (HGGT) Water Lane Strategic Site –
“Proposals For The Way Forward”

Report Reference: JC-009-2024/25

Date: 10 February 2025

Report Authors: Peter van der Zwan - Principal Planning Officer (Epping Forest
District Council)

Adeola Pilgrim – HGGT Lead Liaison Officer (Epping Forest District
Council)

Enclosures: Appendix A – Water Lane Stakeholder Engagement Proposal

Recommendations/Decisions Required:

The HGGT Joint Committee is asked to:

- A. Endorse the Water Lane Stakeholder Engagement Proposal as set out in Appendix A.
- B. Agree to link any proposed consultation with the HGGT Quality of Life Indicators.
- C. Delegate authority to the Acting HGGT Director to finalise the consultation arrangements and programme as may be required, in consultation with the Chair and Vice Chair of the Joint Committee.

Executive Summary:

Allocated within the adopted Epping Forest District Local Plan, the HGGT Water Lane strategic site will provide around 2,100 new homes within the Harlow and Gilston Garden Town, alongside

community facilities including a local centre, new primary school and strategic natural greenspace. The site will be connected to Harlow Town Centre and the wider Garden Town via direct pedestrian and cycle links as well as bus services which will run along a dedicated Sustainable Transport Corridor.

The site is split into two main areas - West Katherines and West Sumners – and is being promoted by Manor Oak Homes, Martin Grant Homes, Persimmon Homes and Taylor Wimpey (the Developers). The Developers are collaborating to prepare a Strategic Masterplan for the area, and a Planning Performance Agreement (PPA) is in place to provide a project management framework for progressing this. The PPA is between Epping Forest District Council (EFDC), Harlow District Council (HDC), Essex County Council (ECC) and the Developers. The Strategic Masterplan will set out the key development, design and delivery principles and guide future planning application proposals.

To enable the masterplanning process to progress, the developers have submitted a proposal to engage with residents and businesses around the Water Lane Strategic Masterplan Area. The aim of the stakeholder engagement is to establish how the development of the Water Lane Strategic Masterplan Area could be successfully integrated into the existing neighbourhoods and to ensure that the development delivers benefits for the wider community.

Appendix A contains the Water Lane Stakeholder Engagement Proposal which outlines the developers' proposed approach to interact and communicate with residents and businesses.

Reasons for proposed Decision:

The HGGT Vision is for early community engagement that brings local people into the conversation about the planned growth across the HGGT area. The Water Lane Stakeholder Engagement Proposal aims to enable the 5 Council partners and the developers of the Water Lane strategic site to communicate effectively with communities and stakeholders in a way that intends to build trust and ensures that the delivery of the Garden Town is the result of genuine collaboration. It will also assist in monitoring the performance of the development overall, in relation to Quality of Life.

Other Options for Action:

It could be determined not to agree the Water Lane Stakeholder Engagement Proposal and to take no further action in relation to it. Community consultation would be delivered to meet basic legal requirements of the planning system. This option as a course of action is **not recommended**. It would not support and enable the approach of the 5 Council partners to support the HGGT Vision with strong leadership and participative community engagement. It would also leave landowners, developers, community representatives and other stakeholders

without further guidance from the 5 Council partners of HGGT on the steps towards supporting the delivery of this development proposal within the Garden Town.

I. Introduction

- 1.1 East Herts District Council, Epping Forest District Council, Harlow District Council and Essex and Hertfordshire County Councils are working in partnership to bring forward transformational growth in the form of the Harlow and Gilston Garden Town. The Garden Town represents a major opportunity to accommodate around 16,000 homes up to 2033, with a further 7,000 homes by 2040. The Garden Town will also provide a mix of development, including employment, schools, transport infrastructure and community facilities.
- 1.2 Harlow and Gilston Garden Town comprises the whole of Harlow together with four new Garden Town neighbourhoods including East of Harlow, Latton Priory, the Water Lane Area, and Gilston Area. Three of these neighbourhoods (East of Harlow, Latton Priory and Water Lane Area) lie within or partially within Epping Forest District and are central to the Spatial Development Strategy of the adopted Epping Forest District Local Plan.
- 1.3 The Water Lane Area allocation provides capacity for a minimum of 2,100 homes, alongside community facilities, early years provision, a new primary school and appropriate contributions towards a secondary school to serve the needs arising from new development. In addition, five traveller pitches will be provided.

2. Background

- 2.1 Development proposals for HGGT strategic sites must reflect and demonstrate that the principles set out in the relevant policy framework have been adhered to. One of the requirements of the Epping Forest District Local Plan is that a Strategic Masterplan is developed for each of the new Garden Town neighbourhoods prior to the submission of a planning application, to guide the planning, design and implementation of any proposed development. Strategic Masterplans will be produced by the site developers, in partnership with EFDC and relevant stakeholders and will be taken into account as an important material consideration in the determination of planning applications.
- 2.2 The delivery of the Water Lane Strategic Site is evolving via a developer-led Strategic Masterplan Framework (SMF) which is being progressed under a Performance Planning Agreement (PPA) agreed between EFDC, HDC, ECC and the developers of Water Lane. It includes key milestones and actions that are required to ensure that all key planning issues are properly considered and resolved at the earliest possible stage.



3. Water Lane Stakeholder Engagement Proposal

- 3.1 The Developers understand that any development proposal for the Water Lane strategic site needs to be designed to deliver benefits for current residents and businesses of both Epping Forest and Harlow District Councils as well as integrate with existing services and communities. They are therefore proposing to embark on a programme of stakeholder engagement collaboratively with HGGT. The engagement will assist in understanding the needs of the broader community, how those needs can be met in line with policy requirements, as well as seeking to address concerns that residents may have about the new development.
- 3.2 The proposed approach to engagement is supported by the HGGT Quality of Life Framework as it would provide a baseline for measuring the social impacts of growth and change in the area. It would also help establish community-led stewardship by building relationships and social capital with local communities and increasing community influence in planning decisions. It would therefore be beneficial to link any proposed consultation with the HGGT Quality of Life Indicators.
- 3.3 This round of stakeholder engagement will be in ‘listening mode’ and is not intended to present masterplans or other proposals. Rather, feedback from these discussions will help inform and shape the masterplanning process. The expectation is that the programme will engage existing Parish Councils, Ward Members, community groups and representatives including resident groups and associations, and local businesses as a minimum. The opportunity to develop a Community Panel which puts local people at the heart of decision-making would also be explored.
- 3.4 This phase of the project is crucial for advancing proposals to develop the HGGT Water Lane strategic site. The Developers envisage that early engagement with stakeholders would help align development proposals with the needs of local residents and businesses which would in turn demonstrate the wider benefits to the community.

4. Next Steps

- 4.1 Following the decision of the Joint Committee, a project plan will be prepared collaboratively between the Developers and the HGGT partners, setting out a programme of events and agreed milestones. This would enable the stakeholder engagement to commence in January 2025 as proposed.
- 4.2 The Developers have also agreed to appoint and work in partnership with a third-party engagement consultant to help facilitate the stakeholder engagement process. This would

ensure that the project receives the attention and expertise necessary for a successful implementation.

Implications:

If approved, the Water Lane Stakeholder Engagement Proposal will lead to more informed decision making and better outcomes and will also enable the delivery of the HGGT Water Lane strategic site to advance to the next phase.

Resource Implications

There are no financial implications to HGGT for delivering the recommendations within this report.

Equalities and Diversity

Equality Impact Assessment

Is this a new policy (or decision) or a change to an existing policy, practice or project?	Yes
Describe the main aims, objectives and purpose of the policy or decision	To understand and consider the impacts on those affected by the Water Lane development proposals in line with the HGGT Communications and Engagement Strategy.
What outcome(s) are you hoping to achieve (ie decommissioning or commissioning a service)?	Allow the local community to provide feedback to inform planning decisions.
Does or will the policy or decision affect: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • service users • employees • the wider community or groups of people, particularly where there are areas of known inequalities? 	Service users and the wider community will be given a platform to express their opinions and empowered to influence decisions that affect their lives.
Will the policy or decision influence how organisations operate?	No
Will the policy or decision involve substantial changes in resources?	No

Is this policy or decision associated with any of the Council's other policies and how, if applicable, does the proposed policy support corporate outcomes?	The project is aligned with the HGGT Communications and Engagement Strategy as well as the strategic objectives and corporate policies in place across the 5 Council partners of HGGT.
What does the information tell you about those groups identified?	N/A
Have you consulted or involved those groups that are likely to be affected by the policy or decision you want to implement? If so, what were their views and how have their views influenced your decision?	This report proposes to consult with residents in Epping Forest and Harlow District Councils regarding the Water Lane development.
If you have not consulted or engaged with communities that are likely to be affected by the policy or decision, give details about when you intend to carry out consultation or provide reasons for why you feel this is not necessary:	Extensive consultation took place on the HGGT Communications and Engagement Strategy that sets the policy context for this project. Further feedback will be acquired as an outcome the project.
Use this section to assess any potential impact on equality groups based on what you now know.	
Age, Disability, Gender, Gender reassignment, Pregnancy/maternity, Marriage/civil partnership, Race, Religion/belief, Sexual orientation	There is no impact on any protected groups.
Does the EqIA indicate that the policy or decision would have a medium or high	No

HGGT Vision Assurance

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

The project seeks to address several key principles under Placemaking and Homes and is aimed at creating vibrant, inclusive and sustainable communities.

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

The project aligns with the HGGT Communications and Engagement Strategy which is designed to support the HGGT Vision by setting out how commitments to inform, involve and empower stakeholders through effective and meaningful engagement.

HGGT

HARLOW & GILSTON
GARDEN TOWN

APPENDIX A





Water Lane, Harlow

Stakeholder Engagement Proposal

October 2024



Introduction

- 1. This proposal is submitted by Manor Oak Homes, Martin Grant Homes, Persimmon Homes and Taylor Wimpey (the Developers) who are collaborating in the preparation of a Strategic Masterplan for Water Lane, West Harlow.**
- 2. The proposal is submitted with the aim of agreeing a programme of stakeholder engagement with the Harlow & Gilston Garden Town Joint Committee (JC).**
- 3. The programme will be focused on the residents and businesses of Katherines and Sumners – the neighbourhoods located in West Harlow closest to the Water Lane Strategic Masterplan area.**
- 4. The purpose of the engagement is:**
 - 1. To introduce the Developers and establish a constructive dialogue with local residents and businesses.**
 - 2. To understand initial views and opinions on the Water Lane Local Plan allocations adopted with the Epping Forest District Council Local Plan.**
 - 3. To inform the future preparation of the Strategic Masterplan for Water Lane.**

Background

- 1. In the promotion of land at Water Lane for development, Martin Grant Homes, Persimmon Homes and Taylor Wimpey (the Consortium) are in formal consortium with one another.**
- 2. They have been in collaborative discussion with Manor Oak since at least 2019 when the group presented to the Quality Review Panel (QRP).**
- 3. Manor Oak control land south of Water Lane. The Consortium control land to the north of Water Lane.**
- 4. The group have:-**
 - 1. Together completed a Planning Performance Agreement (PPA) with Epping Forest District Council (EFDC), Harlow District Council (HDC) and Essex County Council (ECC) in support of a Strategic Masterplan for the Water Lane area.**
 - 2. Been actively engaged with the Councils and the Garden Town team throughout the Local Plan process.**

Epping Forest Local Plan

1. EFDC adopted its Local Plan on 14th March 2023.
2. This completed the Local Plan adoptions in the Harlow & Gilston Garden Town; following:-
 - Harlow Local Plan – adopted December 2020
 - East Herts Local Plan- adopted October 2018
3. The key policy for Water Lane is SP4 (overleaf) with the following also of relevance
 - Water Lane Strategic Masterplan area (SP3)
 - Sustainable Transport Corridor
4. Crucially, the EFDC Local Plan releases land west of Harlow from the Green Belt and allocates the land for future development.

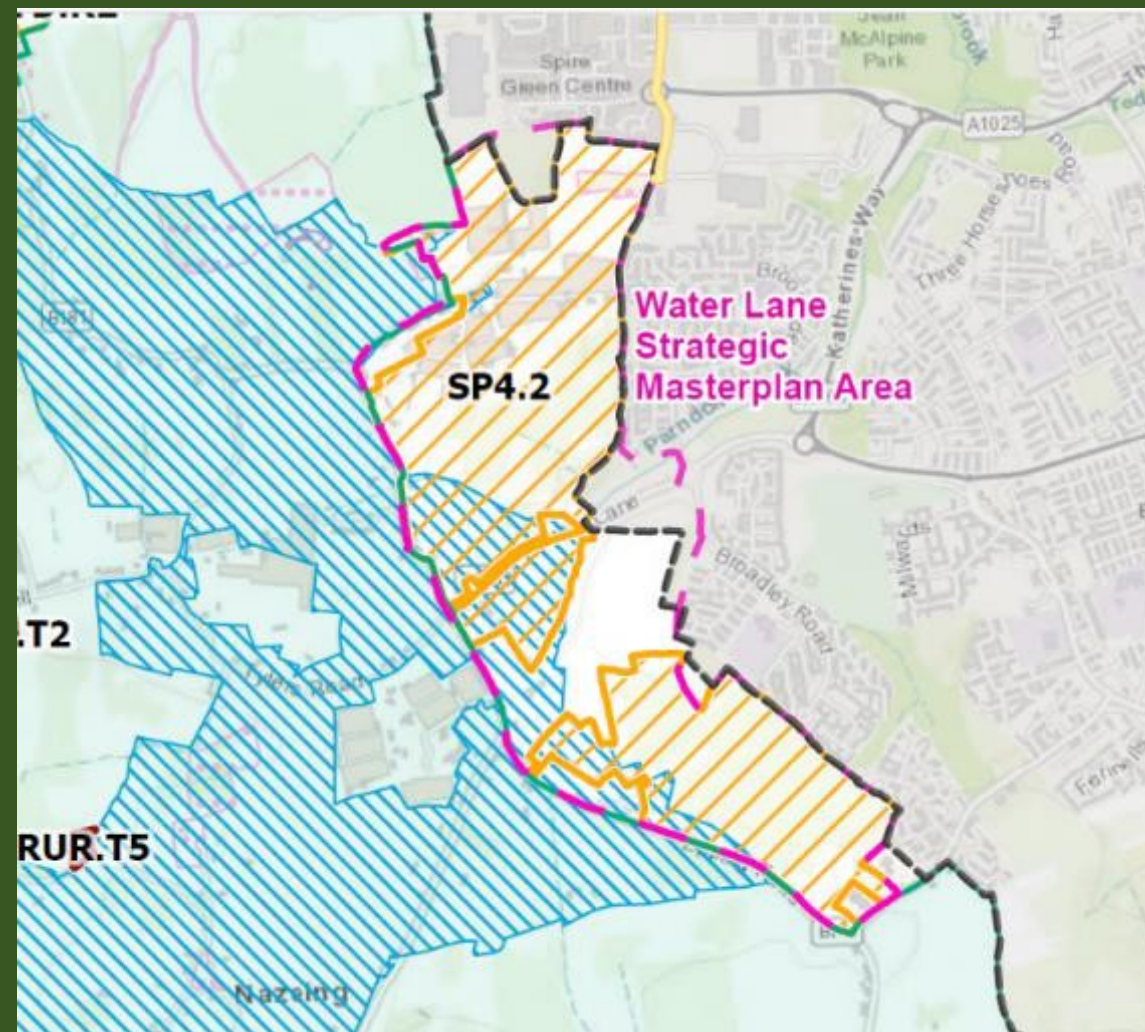


Policy SP4 - requires

1. A minimum of 2,100 homes
2. Five traveller pitches
3. A local centre
4. A new primary school with early years and childcare provision on an education site of at least 2.5 hectares
5. Contributions towards new secondary school provision within the Garden Town
6. The provision of appropriate community and health facilities
7. Highway and transport improvements including contributions towards Sustainable Transport Corridors; works to Water Lane/A1169 roundabout; A1025/Abercrombie Way signals and traffic calming along the Southern Way corridor;
8. Satisfactory utility infrastructure including water, wastewater, solid waste, gas, electricity and telecommunications for occupants
9. Bus services and direct pedestrian and cycle links between homes, the facilities that serve them and other key destinations

Policy SP3 – requires

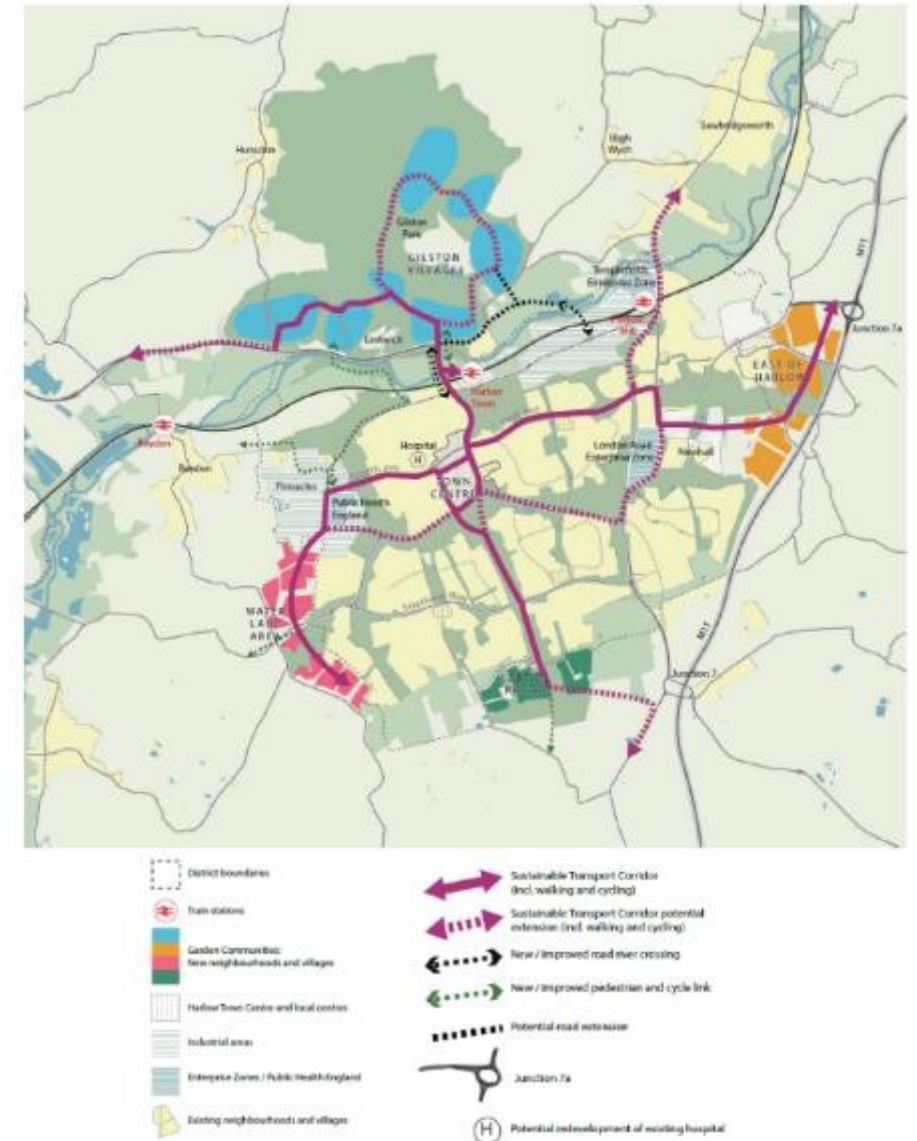
1. That Strategic Masterplans will be developed for each of the Garden Communities setting out the key development, design and delivery principles and to guide proposals.
2. Planning applications and any other consenting mechanisms for the Garden Communities should be accompanied by Strategic Masterplans which demonstrate that the development requirements set out in the Policy have been accommodated and which have been endorsed by the Council and where appropriate Harlow District Council.
3. Endorsed Strategic Masterplans will be taken into account as an important material consideration in the determination of any planning applications.



Sustainable Transport Corridors

1. The Garden Town has been built on the premise of high frequency, priority bus routes providing an attractive alternative to private car use - linking to employment areas, the Town Centre and public transport hubs.
2. These routes are called Sustainable Transport Corridors (STCs) and as well as public transport, they are to provide attractive pedestrian and cycle routes.
3. The routes of the STCs are within both the Epping Forest and Harlow adopted Local Plans.

Map 2.2 Sustainable Transport Corridors in the Harlow and Gilston Garden Town



Stakeholder Engagement

1. It is understood that the development of the Water Lane Strategic Masterplan area requires the active engagement of the existing residents and businesses that will be affected.
2. The Developers fully appreciate this and are committed to a programme of stakeholder engagement.
3. It is proposed to embark on this programme collaboratively with the Garden Town JC and its Officers.
4. Initially, the programme will engage:
 1. Existing Ward Members – Great Parndon and Sumners & Kingsmoor
 2. Community representatives – residents groups and associations, community groups
 3. Local businesses
5. The opportunity will be taken if possible to develop a “Community Panel” in each area (Katherines and Sumners) of interested resident and business representatives.

Listening Mode

- 1. This will be very much in a “listening mode” – to understand as much as possible the existing neighbourhoods, what matters to local residents and businesses, what concerns them about new development.**
- 2. Reference will be made to the EFDC Local Plan and its Water Lane allocation policies.**
- 3. It is not proposed to present masterplans or other proposals – this would be rightly seen as premature.**
- 4. Manor Oak will lead on engagement with Sumners residents and the Consortium will lead on engagement with Katherines residents – regularly exchanging notes with one another as well as the Garden Town team.**
- 5. The aim would be to establish how the development of the Water Lane Masterplan area could be successfully integrated and add value to the existing neighbourhoods, concerns with development allayed and community support generated.**

Concerns with Development

1. From experience, the Developers would anticipate the following areas of community concern: -
 1. Traffic impact. This is a function of:
 1. Existing congestion.
 2. The increase in local population that comes with new housing development.
 3. Active travel and public transport services – accessibility, appeal, reliability.
 4. Accessibility of schools, shops, leisure facilities etc
 2. Pressure on existing community infrastructure
 1. School places
 2. Access to health services, community, sports and leisure facilities
 3. Loss of employment land.
 4. Landscape impact.
 5. Construction disturbance.

Addressing Concerns

1. As noted above, central to the Water Lane proposal is the STC. This will provide travel options – public transport particularly – as an alternative to the private car.
2. The Water Lane allocation requires new school, community and health infrastructure – either directly or through contributions.
3. General development plan policies will mitigate landscape impact and construction disturbance.
4. Existing employers will be supported in their relocation to suitable, alternative premises in the District.

Benefits

1. Of course, the Water Lane development offers many benefits to a local community:
 1. Access to new housing - particularly affordable housing to those in housing need.
 2. New employment and training opportunities.
 3. Investment in the local economy.
 4. New schools.
 5. New community, health and sports facilities.
2. A key focus of the engagement will be how these benefits – and other benefits to be identified – can be nurtured and realised in a form that are clear and tangible for the residents, stakeholders and businesses of Katherines and Sumners.

Next Steps

1. If supported by the Garden Town JC, the stakeholder engagement is proposed to commence in January 2025 and be completed within an agreed timescale (TBC)
2. Phase One will focus initially on elected and community representatives in:
 1. Sumners – led by Manor Oak.
 2. Katherines – led by the Consortium.

The outcomes of these discussions will inform the scope of work and timescales for the future work
3. The engagement will be very much in a “listening mode” and to establish relationships in the two neighbourhoods.
4. The opportunity will be taken if possible to develop a “Community Panel” in each area of interested residents and business representatives.
5. Following this first phase, a report will be submitted to the Garden Town JC with proposals for the next stage of engagement work.

