

**Report to the Cabinet**

**Report reference:** C-022-2018/19  
**Date of meeting:** 10 December 2018



**Epping Forest  
 District Council**

**Portfolio:** Planning Services (Councillor J. Philip)  
**Subject:** Harlow and Gilston Garden Town - Vision and Design Guide  
**Responsible Officer:** A. Blom-Cooper (01992 564066)  
**Democratic Services:** A. Hendry (01992 564246)

**Recommendations/Decisions Required:**

- (1) That the Garden Town Vision and Design Guide documents appended to this report be agreed as material planning considerations for the preparation of masterplans, pre-application advice, assessing planning applications and any other development management purposes for sites within the Harlow and Gilston Garden Town; and
- (2) That the Planning Portfolio Holder be authorised to make minor amendments to the Garden Town Vision and Design Guide documents should there be any agreed changes proposed by the respective committees of East Herts, Harlow and Epping Forest District Council's in order to ensure a consistent document

**Executive Summary:**

Harlow and Gilston was designated as a Garden Town by the Ministry for Homes, Communities and Local Government in January 2017 and will comprise new and existing communities in and around Harlow. East Herts, Epping Forest and Harlow District Councils are working together with Hertfordshire and Essex County Councils to ensure plans for the Garden Town support sustainable living and a healthy economy; provide a good quality of life for existing and future residents; and respond to local landscape and character.

Allies and Morrison were commissioned to support the Councils in developing a vision and design principles for the Harlow and Gilston Garden Town, through developing a strategic narrative, and establishing clear parameters for future masterplanning and consideration of planning applications across the Garden Town that will ensure a consistent high-quality approach to growth.

The vision and design principles have been reviewed and amended through public and developer consultation and the Garden Town Quality Review Panel. It is recommended that the Garden Town Vision and Garden Town Design Guide are agreed as material planning considerations, when assessing site specific masterplans, the emerging Gilston Area Charter, pre-application proposals, planning applications and for any other Development Management purposes. This will ensure that development proposals will achieve garden town ambitions, and that clear parameters are established for future masterplanning and consideration of planning applications across the Garden Town.

**Reasons for Proposed Decision:**

To give the Garden Town Vision and Design Guide suitable planning weight by endorsing these documents as material planning considerations, to ensure that development proposals will achieve garden town ambitions, and that clear parameters are established for future masterplanning pre-application advice, assessing planning applications and any other development management purposes within the Harlow and Gilston Garden Town

**Other Options for Action:**

Not to endorse the Garden Town Vision and Garden Town Design Guide as material planning considerations, would mean to adopt a reactive rather than pro-active approach to managing and overseeing development emerging within the Garden Town. This would increase the risk of uncoordinated development of poor quality, without the overarching value of the Garden Town and its holistic high-quality design and sustainable ambitions.

**Report:**

1. As part of the work for the Garden Town, the Council has been working with both Harlow Council and East Herts Council. One of the first pieces of work commissioned by the Harlow and Gilston Garden Town quality design workstream, was to develop a vision and design principles for the Garden Town. The following documents considered by the Harlow and Gilston Garden Town Board on 12 November 2018 for endorsement of the Garden Town Vision and Garden Town Design Guide, are attached as appendices to this report:
  - Appendix 1 - Harlow and Gilston Garden Town Board Report, Garden Town Vision and Design Guide, 12 November 2018;
  - Appendix 2 – Garden Town Vision, November 2018; and
  - Appendix 3 – Garden Town Design Guide, November 2018
2. The intention is for the Vision and the Design Guide to be endorsed as material planning considerations by each District Council. These are intended to remain a consideration alongside and beyond the life of the respective Local Plans and their allocations. They will not be superseded by emerging policies or guidance, unless indicated.
3. Applicants and designers will also need to demonstrate how their proposals answer the design quality questions in the Garden Town Design Guide, addressing the key principles for healthy growth as set out in the Vision and Design Guide. This should be through creating a clear vision for the proposal, understanding and analysis of the site, proposed engagement with stakeholders and the community, and showing how the proposal will contribute to the wider Garden Town Vision, throughout the life of the development.
4. The governance arrangements for the agreement of the documents associated with the Garden Town were approved by Cabinet on 18 October 2018. The Vision and Design Guide is the first of the documents to be considered by the Garden Town Member Board on 12 November 2018 with a recommendation that they be taken to the three district councils for endorsement as material planning considerations for the preparation of masterplans, pre-application advice, assessing planning applications and any other development management purposes. The Board also suggested that the respective Portfolio Holders should be given delegated power to agree minor amendments to the two documents should changes be agreed by any of the three authorities in order to ensure consistency of the documents. These would then go back to the Board at its

next meeting of 4 February 2019 for final endorsement. The Garden Town Member Board agreed:

- (a) To note the report attached as Appendix 1;
- (b) To recommend that officers for the three Garden Town local planning authorities use this report to take the Vision and Design Guide documents to a meeting of the Harlow Cabinet on 6 December 2018 and Council on 18 December; East Herts Executive Council on 11 December 2018 and Full Council on 19 December 2018; and Epping Forest District Council Cabinet Committee on 10 December for endorsement as material planning considerations for the preparation of masterplans, the preparation of the Gilston Area Charter, pre-application advice, assessing planning applications and any other development management purposes and to delegate to the respective Portfolio Holders to make minor amendments to the documents should there be any agreed changes proposed by the respective Committees in order to ensure a consistent document; and
- (c) To bring the final version of the Vision and Design Guide documents to the 4 February 2019 Garden Town Member Board meeting for endorsement.

### **Resource Implications:**

The successful delivery of the Garden Town sites within Epping Forest District require a significant commitment of EFDC Officer time. The approval of the recommendations contained within this report will not give rise to additional resource implications, but will help to facilitate high quality development within the Garden Town.

### **Legal and Governance Implications:**

The Garden Town Vision and Design Guide have been developed in the context of Government Policy (NPPF) and Planning Practice Guidance.

### **Safer, Cleaner and Greener Implications:**

The Garden Town Vision and Design Guide seeks to take forward Local Plan policy designed to promote the notion of making good places to live, work and visit. This will include safer by design principles, sustainable development, the provision of alternatives to the car, energy efficiency and environmental considerations as well as sustainable drainage systems and quality green infrastructure. Strategic Masterplans and Concept Frameworks will be the mechanism for these place-making measures to be delivered in identified Masterplan Areas.

### **Consultation Undertaken:**

The Vision and Design Guide has been developed in partnership with other local authorities in the Garden Town. Please refer to the report appended (Appendix A) and to the Consultation Comments Table (Appendix G) for wider stakeholder and community engagement.

### **Background Papers:**

- *C-015-2018/19* Governance arrangements for Local Plan Implementation
- Garden Town Vision and Design Guide consultation comments table
- Quality Review Panel reports

**Risk Management:**

The use of these documents as material planning considerations will support the Council's objectives of achieving high quality design in the district and reduce the risk of poor quality development