

**REPORT TO:** CABINET

**DATE:** 6 DECEMBER 2018

**TITLE:** SPATIAL VISION AND DESIGN CHARTER

**PORTFOLIO HOLDER:** COUNCILLOR DANNY PURTON, PORTFOLIO HOLDER FOR ENVIRONMENT

**LEAD OFFICER:** ANDREW BRAMIDGE, PROJECT DIRECTOR – ENTERPRISE ZONE AND INTERIM HEAD OF PLANNING (01279) 446410

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**This is a Key Decision**  
**It is on the Forward Plan as Decision Number I009345**  
**Call-in Procedures may apply**  
**This decision will affect all Wards.**

**RECOMMENDED that:**

- A** Cabinet approves the Harlow and Gilston Garden Town Vision and Design Guide (attached as appendices A and B to the report), 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.

**REASON FOR DECISION**

- A** To ensure that development proposals in the Harlow and Gilston Garden Town will achieve the Garden Town ambitions.
- B** To ensure that clear parameters are established for future master planning and consideration of planning applications across the Garden Town.

**BACKGROUND**

1. In June 2017, Allies and Morrison were commissioned to support Harlow, Epping Forest and East Hertfordshire District Councils in developing vision and design principles for the Harlow and Gilston Garden Town. The brief required the development of a compelling vision and set of high-level principles for the

Garden Town, showing how new growth will complement and enhance its location and contribute to the regeneration of Harlow and its town centre as a key regional centre in order to seize this once in a generation opportunity.

2. The aim of the Vision, formerly known as the Spatial Vision, was to develop a strategic narrative to:
  - a) Identify the potential of the Harlow and Gilston Garden Town;
  - b) Illustrate the economic, environmental, social and cultural connections of the Garden Town;
  - c) Consider the Garden Town's unique growth potential and what barriers may exist to that potential which the Garden Town must seek to address;
  - d) Consider opportunities for enhancing green infrastructure and creating integrated, inclusive, healthy communities;
  - e) Consider the economic and employment role of potential new growth; and
  - f) Consider delivering a step-change in sustainable transport.
3. The design element of the work required the development of a set of principles that establish clear parameters for future master planning and consideration of planning applications across the Garden Town that will ensure a consistent high-quality approach to growth.
4. To support the Vision, a Design Guide has also been prepared. The Vision and Design Guide were previously known as the 'Spatial Vision' and 'Design Charter' respectively. The names were changed as a result of feedback from stakeholder engagement.

## **ISSUES/PROPOSALS**

### **Stakeholder Engagement**

5. From the outset of the project it was expected that the vision and design principles would be informed by ongoing stakeholder engagement. Therefore workshops were held between September and December 2017, and a workshop with the Garden Town Member Board was held in February 2018. These stakeholder workshops helped inform the emerging vision and design principles.
6. Consultation was undertaken in July 2018 and included a two week static exhibition from 2 to 13 July in the Harlow Civic Centre reception and one staffed evening drop-in event in the Water Gardens on 9 July. Similar events were held in the Epping Forest and East Hertfordshire districts. Consultation materials and

feedback forms were available online for four weeks on all three of the Council's websites.

7. The draft vision and design principles were also shared with the site promoters of the strategic sites in the Garden Town at one-to-one meetings held in June and July 2018.
8. A joint press release was issued and used to advertise the events, through each of the Council's websites, social media and print. All exhibition material was also published on the respective Council websites and a short questionnaire was produced and made available both in hard-copy and online.
9. A total of 97 visitors were recorded as attending the staffed public exhibitions; no count was made in relation to the static exhibitions. In total 58 respondents provided comments which were received either at the exhibitions, through the online questionnaire or by email and post.

### **Harlow and Gilston Garden Town Quality Review Panel**

10. The Harlow and Gilston Garden Town Quality Review Panel provides impartial and objective advice from a range of experienced practitioners.
11. In May 2018, a draft version of the Vision was considered by the Quality Review Panel. The Panel commended the draft Vision as setting a positive tone, with high aspirations underpinned by a depth of thinking, but emphasised the importance of giving it formal weight in the planning process, stating that this will be fundamental to its successful implementation.
12. The Panel also emphasised the importance of celebrating what is already special about Harlow and the local area, stating that the document would further benefit from greater emphasis around the core message of the Garden Town as a landscape-led network of integrated neighbourhoods and villages. The Panel suggested other aspects of the Vision that could be further refined including around: the character and quality of the centres, including Harlow Town Centre; village centre hierarchy, self-sufficiency and identity; employment clusters and innovation; fostering change through early small-scale interventions; and sustainable transport, including connections between the Gilston Area and Harlow Town Centre.
13. The Panel supported the proposed approach of developing key principles and indicators around the four key themes of:
  - a) Placemaking and Homes;
  - b) Landscape and Green infrastructure;
  - c) Sustainable Movement; and
  - d) Economy and Regeneration.

14. A copy of the Quality Review Panel's full report is attached as Appendix C to this report. Following the Quality Review Panel, the Garden Town Member Board agreed that consultation should be undertaken on the Vision including the design principles.
15. The draft version of the Design Guide was considered by the Quality Review Panel in July 2018. The Panel considered that the Design Guide, when read in conjunction with the Vision, showed promise as a clear prospectus, the key audience for which is intended to be developers and landowners aiming to bring forward development within the Garden Town. The Panel raised some questions around the status and purpose of the document, again setting out the importance of giving it formal weight in the planning process. A copy of the Quality Review Panel's full report is attached as Appendix D to this report.
16. A final draft version of the Design Guide was taken to the Quality Review Panel for a Chair's Review in October 2018. The review focused on the set of design quality questions included in the Design Guide, which applicants will be asked to demonstrate answers to through their proposals. These questions will be used by Officers and the Quality Review Panel when reviewing proposals to ensure that these meet the expectations of quality within the Garden Town. The Panel emphasised the need for clarity within the document on the purpose and use of the Design Guide and design quality questions. The Panel also focused on the wording of the design quality questions to ensure the responsibility for demonstration of quality and breadth is with the applicants. A copy of the Chair's Review report is attached for information as Appendix E to this report.

### **Further Steps**

17. Following the consultation events and site promoter engagement, and taking into account the recommendations of the Quality Review Panel, Allies and Morrison summarised the main points raised. A table setting out the comments is attached as Appendix F to the report. A number of amendments have been made to both the Vision and the Design Guide which are detailed in Appendix F.

## **IMPLICATIONS**

### **Place (Includes Sustainability)**

The completion of the Vision and Design Guide is an important milestone in the development of the Harlow and Gilston Garden Town. This sets out a broad statement of intent for the development and establishes some clear principles by which it will be delivered. This will help to make a major contribution to the delivery of additional high quality housing in and around Harlow and help to raise the profile of Harlow as an aspirational place.

**Author: Andrew Bramidge, Project Director – Enterprise Zone and Interim Head of Planning on behalf of Graeme Bloomer, Head of Place**

### **Finance (Includes ICT)**

None specific.

**Author: Simon Freeman, Head of Finance**

**Housing**

As contained in the report.

**Author: Andrew Murray, Head of Housing**

**Community Wellbeing (Includes Equalities and Social Inclusion)**

As contained within the report.

**Author: Jane Greer, Head of Community Wellbeing**

**Governance (Includes HR)**

None specific.

**Author: Colleen O'Boyle, Interim Head of Governance**

**Appendices**

Appendix A – Garden Town Vision, November 2018

Appendix B – Garden Town Design Guide, November 2018

Appendix C – Quality Review Panel report, Garden Town Vision, 24 May 2018

Appendix D – Quality Review Panel report, Garden Town Design Guide, 19 July 2018

Appendix E – Quality Review Panel Chair's Review report, Garden Town Design Guide, 24 October 2018

Appendix F – Garden Town Vision and Design Guide Consultation Comments Table

**Background Papers**

None.

**Glossary of terms/abbreviations used**

None.