

**REPORT TO:** CABINET

**DATE:** 18 JULY 2019

**TITLE:** TOWN CENTRE AREA ACTION PLAN –  
APPROVAL OF REGULATION 19  
CONSULTATION

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

COUNCILLOR JOHN STRACHAN, PORTFOLIO  
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**CONTRIBUTING  
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**This is a Key Decision**

**It is on the Forward Plan as Decision Number I007560**

**Call-in Procedures may apply**

**This decision will affect Little Parndon and Hare Street, Netteswell and  
Toddbrook Wards.**

**RECOMMENDED that Cabinet:**

- A** Approves that the draft Town Centre Area Action Plan (as set out at Appendix A to the report), is published for the purposes of consultation under Regulation 19 of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012 (as amended).
- B** Delegates authority to the Managing Director, in consultation with the Portfolio Holders for Environment and Regeneration, to make and approve any minor or inconsequential amendments to the Town Centre Area Action Plan arising from the completion of ensuing technical documents and any further legal advice prior to formal publication.

## **REASON FOR DECISION**

- A** To enable the Area Action Plan (AAP) to be published for a six week period under Regulation 19 of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012 (as amended) prior to submission to the Secretary of State for consideration by the Inspector at the examination.
- B** To meet the legal requirements of developing and adopting an AAP.

## **BACKGROUND**

1. An AAP that sets out specific planning policies and proposals, can strengthen the vitality and viability of the Town Centre whilst presenting an opportunity to create the conditions for a resilient and successful centre. It will provide a spatial planning framework to guide development and secure the regeneration of Harlow Town Centre for the period to 2033.
2. The AAP has been developed and produced separately from the Local Development Plan (LDP) because of its complexities. It will, however, provide a spatial planning framework that will guide and support future development and regeneration in Harlow Town Centre based on the overarching strategic policies set out in the LDP. The policies in the AAP, in tandem with the LDP, will replace all policies relevant to the Town Centre as set out in the Adopted Replacement Harlow Local Plan (2006).
3. In January 2018, Cabinet approved the draft Issues and Options document and approved the Regulation 18 consultation. Since then, widespread engagement with partners has taken place as well as the public consultation exercise. The draft proposals have also been subject to scrutiny at two meetings of the Harlow and Gilston Garden Town Quality Review Panel. This has culminated in the draft AAP being produced by the consultants Allies and Morrison. This draft has also been discussed by the Local Plan Panel, the Town Centre Cross-Party Members Working Group and is being presented to the Harlow Enterprise Zone Board and the Harlow and Gilston Garden Town Member Board.
4. The AAP is now being presented to Cabinet to approve the formal Regulation 19 Publication stage. After the completion of this stage the AAP will be reported back to Cabinet for final approval to submit the document to the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, for formal Examination by an independent Inspector

## **ISSUES/PROPOSALS**

### **Key Issues**

5. Although it has experienced significant change over the past 65 years, many of the distinctive attributes of Sir Frederick Gibberd's original masterplan remain evident in the structure and character of Harlow Town Centre, as the heart of

Harlow New Town. However, similar to many town and city centres across the UK, shifting economic trends have had, and continue to have a profound impact on the performance and prosperity of Harlow Town Centre. The Town Centre has experienced a decline in the retail ranking from 168 in 2012 to 185 in 2017.

6. Although policies already exist which establish the importance of the Town Centre and seek to protect and enhance its performance, the planning process has the potential to play a more proactive role in strengthening the vitality and viability of the Town Centre and enabling its regeneration. The preparation of a more specific set of planning policies presents an opportunity to create the conditions for a resilient, successful centre reflecting its important sub-regional role. The AAP, in combination with the LDP (and other policies and guidance) will enable the Council alongside wider stakeholder, landowner and developer partners to plan positively for managed change and a sustainable, coordinated approach to growth in the Town Centre.
7. The role and performance of the Town Centre requires broader consideration in the context of the proposed growth which is anticipated across the wider area and neighbouring districts. The Council, alongside Epping Forest District Council and East Hertfordshire District Council, has identified potential for 16,100 new homes at Harlow and Gilston Garden Town through their local plan processes (up to 2033), with an approximately 7,000 additional new homes identified in the Gilston area beyond this plan period. In addition to housing growth, there is also significant economic momentum, with Public Health England relocating to the former Glaxo Smith Kline facility and other employment opportunities being realised through growth of the Harlow Enterprise Zone. The AAP will also set out an appropriate planning strategy to accommodate the additional retail, leisure and other associated uses, that will need to be accommodated in the town centre, arising from this growth and which will support its regeneration.

## **Consultation**

8. A summary of the consultation activities to date can be seen on page 10 of the draft AAP document.
9. It is proposed that the Regulation 19 Consultation on this document will be undertaken from late September 2019 at the earliest, after the summer holiday period and to enable finessing of policies (including justification and implementation) and the completion of associated technical documents such as the Sustainability Appraisal, Habitats Regulations Assessment, the Equalities Impact Assessment and a Monitoring Framework. If these documents identify any substantial changes to be made to the AAP then these will be brought back to Cabinet in September 2019 prior to the commencement of the publication period.

## **Vision**

10. The AAP sets the vision for the Town Centre as:

- a) In the future, Harlow Town Centre will be a successful, sustainable place which serves as the commercial centre for the existing town of Harlow and the planned Garden Town of Harlow and Gilston. The Town Centre will play an important part in helping Harlow and Gilston to step up to a more active economic role within the UK Innovation Corridor.
- b) In order to do this, the Town Centre will have a strong mix of shops and services; offices and employment space; civic and leisure uses; and a thriving evening economy and cultural offer. The Town Centre will also have a decent range of homes that can support a mixed and balanced community.
- c) The Town Centre will be accessible to all, by public transport, cycle, on foot and by car and will help the District to minimise reliance on private cars in the future. The Town Centre will be a healthy place for everyone, contributing to the well-being of the community and the protection and enhancement of the natural environment.

## **Outcomes and Policies**

11. The AAP then seeks to define the following outcomes to help assess whether proposals and investments will deliver the vision of:

- a) A unified Town centre which re-balances the northern and southern areas;
- b) A Town centre which supports wider economic growth;
- c) A retail and leisure offer which appeals to Harlow's catchment;
- d) A high quality public realm and environment with active public spaces;
- e) An inclusive and accessible destination with excellent transport links;
- f) A strong cultural offer which is supported by residents and visitors;
- g) Community facilities which support the town's population;
- h) A cohesive place with design proposals which complement one another; and
- i) A commitment to retain the ethos of the Gibberd Masterplan.

12. A series of spatial objectives to help deliver the outcomes and vision are set out in pages 35 to 43 of the draft AAP.

13. Detailed policies are then set out in Chapter 5 (pages 45 to 95 of the draft AAP).

14. High level principles for developments of sub-areas within the town centre and for the creation of a high quality public realm are set out in Chapter 6 (pages 96 to 117 of the draft AAP). Following adoption of the AAP, the Council will then seek to produce more detailed development briefs for individual sites utilising the principles as set out in the AAP.

## **IMPLICATIONS**

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

As set out in the report.

**Author: Andrew Bramidge, Project Director – Enterprise Zone and Interim Head of Planning**

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

None specific.

**Author: Simon Freeman, Head of Finance and Deputy to the Managing Director**

### **Housing**

As outlined in the report.

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

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

The Town Centre Area Action Plan will provide the framework for development in Harlow Town Centre. The successful development, regeneration and economic growth of this area is essential to provide a vibrant and successful town centre suitable for the needs of Harlow and the wider area.

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

### **Governance (Includes HR)**

The Harlow Town Centre AAP will provide an important policy context for the future growth of Harlow Town Centre and the realisation of key investment opportunities. Approval of the recommendations set out in this report will ensure that the Council is complying with Regulation 19 of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012.

**Author: Simon Hill, Head of Governance**

## **Appendices**

Appendix A – Draft Town Centre Area Action Plan

## **Background Papers**

None.

## **Glossary of terms/abbreviations used**

AAP – Area Action Plan

LDP – Local Development Plan