

REPORT TO: CABINET

DATE: 9 SEPTEMBER 2021

TITLE: HARLOW TOWN PLAN

PORTFOLIO HOLDER: COUNCILLOR MICHAEL HARDWARE,
PORTFOLIO HOLDER FOR STRATEGIC
GROWTH

COUNCILLOR DAN SWORDS, PORTFOLIO
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This is a Key Decision
It is on the Forward Plan as Decision Number I012872
Call-in Procedures may apply
This decision will affect all wards

RECOMMENDED that:

- A** Cabinet endorses the vision and aspirations as set out in the consultation draft of the Harlow Town Plan as set out in Appendix A to the report.
- B** Cabinet authorises that public consultation be undertaken on this draft for a period of eight weeks with any minor amendments following the Cabinet meeting to be delegated to the Head of Environment & Planning in conjunction with the Portfolio Holders for Strategic Growth and Regeneration.
- C** The Town Plan Panel then considers the results of the subsequent consultation exercise and produces an updated version of the Town Plan for adoption by Cabinet.

REASON FOR DECISION

- A** To enable a public consultation exercise to be undertaken to obtain views on the ambitions and objectives for the town in the period to 2047.

BACKGROUND

1. Harlow and the surrounding areas in East Hertfordshire and Epping Forest will see substantial growth over the next couple of decades as part of the Harlow and Gilston Garden Town. This could see Harlow expand to the size of a small city with a population in the region of 130,000.
2. The Harlow Local Development Plan (adopted in December 2020) set out the details of that growth to 2033 and establishes planning policies within that period. It does set out an ambitious vision for that period, but what it does not do is to create a wide-ranging vision for what the town could become over the longer term. The Council has an ambitious vision for growth, success and prosperity and this needs to be articulated in an accessible way to create an aspirational direction for Harlow that the town's residents can be a part of as well as the business community and current and future investors.
3. To date, a number of documents have been produced which help to set out a vision of the future – the Local Plan, Town Investment Plan, Harlow & Gilston Garden Town vision. But, there is not a single document where all this comes together to create a unified plan.

ISSUES/PROPOSALS

Purpose and Objectives of the Town Plan

4. The Town Plan will not replicate or replace other documents. Instead it will set out a holistic vision for the future of the town across a number of themes and will become the source document that other strategies draw inspiration from. For example, the five year review of the Local Plan will take its cue from this document and other strategies, such as the Council's Housing Strategy, will also be guided by it.
5. The original planners of Harlow New Town, under Sir Frederick Gibberd, began with a long term vision for what the town would become. They did not conceive of a simple five or ten year set of objectives – the Harlow Development Corporation was a thirty year project. Accordingly, as Harlow begins to embark on its biggest programme of growth since the formation of the New Town, we should also look to develop a Plan with a similar lifespan. Therefore, as Harlow approaches its 75th birthday, the Harlow Town Plan will look forward to the town's 100th birthday in 2047 and set out a bold and aspirational vision for that.
6. The Town Plan will set out this strong vision for the town and provide a framework for the implementation of a series of actions across a range of themes – Housing, Climate Change, Transport, the Town Centre, Health & Wellbeing and Green Spaces amongst others.

7. The first consultation draft of the Town Plan is appended to this report. This sets out a proposed vision, puts forward some ambitions across each of the themes and then poses some questions to enable some dialogue. The Council will be keen to engender some public debate on these issues over the coming months and so the document has been crafted in a way to pose open questions inviting genuine comment.
8. A public consultation exercise will commence in late September and run through to the end of November. Following which comments will be collated and a further draft of the Town Plan produced to be presented to Cabinet in the New Year for further consideration. It is then envisaged that regular updates to the Town Plan will be produced as Harlow continues to develop and evolve.

IMPLICATIONS

Environment and Planning (Includes Sustainability)

As set out in the report.

Author: Andrew Bramidge, Head of Environment and Planning

Finance (Includes ICT, and Property and Facilities)

None specific.

Author: Simon Freeman, Head of Finance and Deputy to the Chief Executive

Housing

As outlined in the body of the report.

Author: Andrew Murray, Head of Housing

Community Wellbeing (Includes Equalities and Social Inclusion)

As set out in the report.

Author: Jane Greer, Head of Community Wellbeing

Governance (Includes HR)

As set out in the report.

Author: Simon Hill, Head of Governance

Appendices

Appendix A – Town Plan Consultation Draft