

**REPORT TO:** CABINET

**DATE:** 13 JULY 2023

**TITLE:** HARLOW AND GILSTON GARDEN TOWN  
GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE FRAMEWORK

**PORTFOLIO HOLDER:** COUNCILLOR MICHAEL HARDWARE,  
PORTFOLIO HOLDER FOR ECONOMIC  
DEVELOPMENT

**LEAD OFFICER:** PAULINE ELLIOTT, INTERIM HEAD OF PLANNING  
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**CORPORATE PRIORITY:** SECURING INVESTMENT INTO HARLOW

**This is not a Key Decision**

**It is on the Forward Plan as Decision Number I015817**

**The decision is not subject to Call-in Procedures for the following reason:**

Cabinet is endorsing a document in accordance with agreed recommendations of the HGGT Board

**This decision will affect no ward specifically.**

**RECOMMENDED that Cabinet:**

- A** Endorses the HGGT Green Infrastructure Framework, as agreed by the HGGT Board.
- B** Notes that the HGGT Partners are considering the inclusion of the development of Action Plans in the programme of work for the HGGT Partners in forthcoming years.
- C** Notes that the HGGT Green Infrastructure Framework will be reviewed every five years, co-ordinated by the HGGT Partnership.

**REASON FOR DECISION**

- A** To allow the Framework to be endorsed as an HGGT technical document, in accordance with the agreed recommendations of the 7 February 2023 HGGT Board report (see Appendices).
- B** To allow the development of Action Plans in accordance with the Strategic Opportunities as set out in chapters 10 and 11 of the Framework (see Appendices).

- C To ensure the Framework is regularly reviewed.

## **BACKGROUND**

1. The five HGGT partner Councils are at different stages of the plan making process, each with GI Strategies of varying scope and age. The most recent GI strategy/plan for Harlow was the Open Spaces and Green Infrastructure Study, completed in 2013. The HGGT GI Framework sets out a common understanding of the value of, and vision for, a cohesive network of GI assets across the Garden Town.
2. The GI Framework supports the council's corporate priority to secure investment into Harlow; the Garden Town will be a major investment in transport, jobs and community infrastructure to support new and existing residents in the Harlow area.
3. The Framework will help ensure development meets the GI principles within the 2018 HGGT Vision. It will also provide a single point of evidence for officers across the Garden Town and developers to review policy expectations for GI across the five Council partners that make up the HGGT area.
4. Current and emerging legislation and policy shape the requirements and targets for the GI network to deliver, as well as the parallel obligations of Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG), Local Nature Recovery Strategies (LNRS), and wider Environmental Net Gains. Co-ordinated planning and delivery of these through the network of GI will optimise funding and stewardship collaborations and ensure the protection of GI in the long-term.
5. The Framework delivers strategic functions whilst reflecting local need and character. It collates existing plans, strategies and initiatives to identify strategic GI opportunities.
6. The main aims of the Framework are to:
  - a) Provide a framework and lay the ground for a future coherent GI vision for HGGT, which brings together and builds on the GI strategies independently progressed by the five partner Councils;
  - b) Respond to the proposed growth areas and infrastructure of the Garden Town;
  - c) Reflect legal and Planning requirements, both current and emerging;
  - d) Serve as an evidence base that constructively informs future land planning and management, signposting relevant workstreams within the HGGT project such as the Sustainable Transport Corridors;

- e) Provide an overarching strategic framework to inform (as a technical document) landscape-led master planning; and
  - f) Support engagement with landowners and stewardship bodies to enable successful delivery of long term dynamic land management.
7. The HGGT GI Framework seeks to support the achievement of the following HGGT Vision Principles:
- a) Landscape and Green Infrastructure
    - i) Enhancing the green belt and expanding the Green Wedge network.
    - ii) Landscape-led masterplanning.
    - iii) Biodiversity, climate resilience and food security.
    - iv) Using technology in energy generation and conservation.
  - b) Placemaking and Homes
    - i) Responsive and distinctive design.
    - ii) Healthy, safe and connected neighbourhoods and villages.
    - iii) Maximising visibility and appreciation of our heritage.
  - c) Sustainable Movement
    - i) Revitalising the cycle and walking network.
    - ii) Changing the character of roads to streets.
    - iii) Integrated transport: a viable and preferred alternative to cars.
    - iv) Anticipating change and future proofing infrastructure.
  - d) Economy and Regeneration
    - i) A vibrant and resilient Town Centre for all the Garden Town.

## **ISSUES/PROPOSALS**

### **Engagement**

8. Targeted engagement was held with officers from across the five Council partners and technical specialists at an early stage to agree a number of issues,

including the sites to be considered as 'critical threshold sites', the associated buffers and mitigation measures for each.

9. It was also agreed to ascertain existing information on the future Local Nature Recovery Strategies (LNRS) which will be required under the 2021 Environment Act.
10. Two technical stakeholder workshops were held; the first to ensure the baseline information being collected was complete and correct, and the second to present potential strategic opportunities and test their suitability.
11. Following completion of the workshops, the HGGT Quality Review Panel (QRP) provided feedback and recommendations on the process, resources and technical contributions underpinning the emerging GI Framework.
12. A presentation to the HGGT Developer Forum was made in November 2022 to introduce the GI Framework as an evidence base.
13. The final version of the Framework and its appendices was agreed by the Garden Town Board on 7 February 2023. It was subsequently submitted to the five partner Councils for noting and endorsing.

### **Next Steps**

14. Once endorsed, the HGGT GI Framework will be a technical document forming part of the Harlow Local Development Plan Evidence Base.
15. Due to its status as primarily a technical document, it would not have material planning weight in its own right. It would, however, be used in relation to planning and development within the Garden Town, including masterplanning for the new Garden Town Communities.
16. The opportunities identified in the Framework will be taken forward as Action Plans led by the HGGT GI & Stewardship Working Group, through engagement with landowners, promoters, other third parties and stewardship bodies. The Action Plans identified are:
  - a) Biodiversity Net Gain & GI Delivery Across HGGT;
  - b) GI Through the River Stort Valley;
  - c) Gilston Area GI;
  - d) The Green Wedge Network; and
  - e) GI Through the STC.

## **IMPLICATIONS**

### **Strategic Growth and Regeneration**

None specific.

**Author: James Gardner, Assistant Director - Regeneration**

### **Finance**

As contained in the report.

**Author: Simon Freeman, Deputy Chief Executive and Director of Finance**

### **Housing**

None specific.

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

### **Communities and Environment**

None specific.

**Author: Norah Nolan, Acting Assistant Director - Environment**

### **Governance and Corporate Services**

None specific.

**Author: Simon Hill, Director of Governance and Corporate Services**

## **Appendices**

Appendix A – 7 February 2023 HGGT Board report

Appendix B – HGGT GI Framework Part 1

Appendix C – HGGT GI Framework Part 2

Appendix D – HGGT GI Framework Appendices

## **Background Papers**

None.

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

BNG – Biodiversity Net Gain

GI – Green Infrastructure

HGGT – Harlow and Gilston Garden Town

LNRS – Local Nature Recovery Strategies

QRP – Quality Review Panel