

HGGT Strategic Economic Framework



Report to:	Cabinet
Date:	12 October 2023
Portfolio Holder:	Councillor Michael Hardware, Portfolio Holder for Economic Development
Lead Officer:	Pauline Elliott, Interim Head of Planning and Building Control (01279) 446595
Contributing Officer:	Amy Wright, Harlow and Gilston Garden Town District Lead Liaison Officer (01279) 446565
Key Decision:	No
Forward Plan:	I016273
Call In:	This item is subject to call in procedures
Corporate Priorities:	Restore Pride in Harlow Rebuild our Town Secure Investment into Harlow
Wards Affected:	None specifically

Recommended that:

- A** The findings of the HGGT Strategic Economic Framework, as set out in Appendix A, based on Harlow Council's Economic Strategy be endorsed.
- B** Subject to all authorities approving the HGGT Strategic Economic Framework, the Framework is supported and agreed and will form the basis of the approach to economic development in the Garden Town area.
- C** Delegates to the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Leader of the Council and the Portfolio Holder for Economic Development, to make any necessary, non-consequential and minor amendments and refer those amendments back to the HGGT Chair and Director.

Reason for decision

- A** In order to provide consistent and transparent arrangements for the consideration of HGGT matters, to secure the delivery of the HGGT and to secure the wider regeneration of Harlow and economic prosperity of the area.
- B** As one of the five partner authority HGGT Board Members, Harlow Council is in a position to feedback on whether the Strategy and Framework is fit for purpose, having recently completed the Council's own Economic Development Strategy.
- C** To ensure that the views of Harlow District Council are given appropriate consideration, in particular that a significant increase in employment potential is required to support the housing and population growth.

Other Options

- A** There is an option not to ratify the HGGT Strategic Economic Framework. However, this could limit the effective functioning of economic development in Harlow town and the surrounding area. It would inhibit effective strategic collaboration on economic matters, which could harm the future prospects of Harlow town and certainly limit opportunities for effective lobbying, joined up strategy and liaising with stakeholders to achieve timely and efficient results. The Strategic Economic Framework identifies opportunities to raise the economic profile of Harlow and area on the sub-regional scale.

Background

1. The Harlow and Gilston Garden Town (HGGT) Strategic Economic Framework plans for economic growth for at least 20 years across the Garden Town area and builds on Harlow Council's Economic Development Strategy 2023 including its base evidence and key themes. It widens the traditional economic strategy approach to consider Garden Town principles. The Strategic Economic Framework (SEF) was reported to the HGGT Board on 12 September 2023.

Issues/Proposals

2. The framework considers baseline, employment sectors, land provisions and key performance indicators. Over 200 comments were received from 11 organisations, including Harlow Council.
3. The framework identifies and focuses on six themes: Attract (inward investment), Develop & Grow (business & innovation support), Accommodate (employment sites & premises), Enable (skills & training), Retain (community wealth building), and Drive

(coordination & capacity). The SEF identifies a number of priority sectors and potential gaps in job opportunities.

4. The top-down analysis indicates a need for 23,000 additional jobs over the next 20 years or so, to maintain a prosperous community due to the expected population growth from the planned new homes. Projected growth between 2023 and 2045 adds 45,000 residents, requiring 23,000 jobs for a balanced labour market. This represents a 50% expansion from Harlow's current employment capacity. This growth surpasses historical trends, necessitating economic shifts and property market adjustments. The bottom-up analysis identifies the potential for 18,000 - 20,000 jobs through large scale project and policy-driven growth such as the Enterprise Zone and Health sectors. However, this still leaves a projected gap of around 3,000 - 5,000 jobs. If the relocation of the UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) to Harlow goes ahead as originally planned, then it will be a significant contributor to job creation and growth. Priority sectors like health, technology, and construction have been identified. However, growth in these sectors necessitates substantial efforts due to population-related demands.
5. The Garden Town area faces significant challenges in realising the ambitious economic growth identified in the SEF. However, the SEF presents a roadmap for enabling and delivering sustainable, inclusive growth. The area sits at the heart of the UK Innovation Corridor and encompasses an intricate interplay of various factors that influence its economic potential. It is vital that sufficient employment land is provided across the whole area of the HGGT to deliver the projected employment required to meet the expected population growth. By prioritising the development of key sectors identified in the SEF the Garden Town area could position itself as a significant driver for employment growth within the wider region.
6. Within the sub-regional context, the Garden Town is surrounded by a wider functional economic area that includes a range of high growth job creation areas. These neighbouring areas, including Stansted Airport, North Weald Airfield, Sunset Studios in Broxbourne, and the Bishop's Stortford cluster. The SEF is clear in recognising that the Garden Town's unique attributes position it not only to complement these neighbouring areas, but also the potential to outperform them in terms of job creation and economic growth. By promoting skills development, fostering partnerships between training providers and employers, and prioritising SME engagement, it seeks to ensure that economic benefits are equitably distributed across the population. The functional economic area of the Garden Town area is multifaceted and can both contribute to and draw from the greater sub-region. By embracing these unique opportunities, the Garden Town's functional economic area has the potential to not only shape its own future but also make a lasting economic impact within the broader sub-regional landscape.
7. The biggest challenge in ensuring the growth opportunity is fully realised lies in co-ordinating activity across multiple organisations (each with varying and evolving roles in relation to economic development; and operating at multiple, overlapping geographies), to ensure that actions in the SEF are recognised by multiple partners, resourced and implemented. HGGT proposes to work with its partners to enable this to happen. A

progress report will be made to the HGGT Board with recommendations for implementation in December 2023. It will be important that all partners are engaged in the resourcing and delivery of the strategy.

Implications

Equalities and Diversity

The HGGT SEF has been screened for an equalities impact assessment, and a full assessment is not necessary at this time but can be carried out later in the year.

Climate Change

The HGGT SEF will ensure sustainable development for future communities by helping to ensure an adequate supply of employment land and by providing opportunities for an appropriate number of jobs to support the growing population locally, thereby reducing the need to travel.

Finance

None specific.

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

Governance and Corporate Services

The proposed framework will improve the transparency of decisions taken around the Garden Town. Although there are no specific governance implications, the council's new approach to data lead decision-making will be underpinned by this document. As has been stated earlier in the report, a full equalities assessment will be required at a later point.

Author: Simon Hill, Director of Governance and Corporate Services

Housing

The implications outlined in the report are noted. They will bring much needed investment to the District and its residents.

Author: Neil Euesden, Interim Director of Housing

Strategic Growth and Regeneration

The delivery of the Harlow and Gilston Garden Town will be one of the country's largest growth projects extending over more than 20 years. The programme is moving into a delivery phase with planning applications now determined for some of the Gilston developments and the associated infrastructure. It is important that an approved strategic economic framework helps to guide the economic strategy of the area.

Author: Andrew Bramidge, Chief Executive

Appendices

Appendix A – HGGT Strategic Economic Framework

Background Papers

Harlow Economic Development Strategy -

<https://www.harlow.gov.uk/sites/default/files/documents/Economic%20development%20strategy%202023%20to%202028.pdf>

Glossary of terms/abbreviations used:

HGGT – Harlow and Gilston Garden Town

LEP – Local Enterprise Partnership

SEF – Strategic Economic Framework