

HARLOW TOWN PLAN – consultation draft

On reasonable request, the council will provide this document in alternative formats such as large copy print.

1. Introduction

1.1 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.

1.2 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.

1.3 The Town Plan will not replicate or replace other documents. Instead it will set out an 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.

1.4 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.

2. Consultation

2.1 The Town Plan will set out a 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.

2.2 This is the first consultation draft of the Town Plan. 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.

2.3 Initial consultation on the document will be undertaken from the middle of November 2021 to the middle of January 2022.

2.4 As well as the questionnaire aimed at Harlow residents, the Council is also taking the opportunity to discuss the Harlow Town Plan in a range of fora and with a range of partners. As well as the HGGT Board, this will also include the Harlow Growth Board, Harlow Chamber of Commerce, Gilston Steering Group and also the local community and voluntary sectors.

3. Harlow Town Plan Vision

3.1 Harlow has expanded considerably since it was initially founded and developed as a New Town in 1947. It is a major urban centre in the west of Essex, adjacent to Hertfordshire, lying in the M11 and London to Stansted and Cambridge rail corridor, which is one of the UK's fastest growing economic regions with Harlow at its heart. Plans are already in place for significant expansion of Harlow, as part of the Harlow & Gilston Garden Town, very much in line with those put forward by the town's original master planner Sir Frederick Gibberd in the 1970's.

3.2 This 'greater Harlow' will have an additional 19,000 homes and the population will be close to 130,000 - a small city. This is the opportunity to deliver the vital critical mass required to attract the infrastructure and facilities we have been seeking for some years. It is important, however, that we have the infrastructure, vital to sustainable development, provided at pace to avoid the town being overwhelmed.

3.3 Much has been achieved in recent years, including the adoption of the Harlow Local Development Plan, which will shape the growth and development of the town until 2033, together with a host of regeneration initiatives and the designation of the Harlow and Gilston Garden Town.

3.4 Looking to the future, however, it is clear that the town is not large enough to provide the critical mass that is required to support and sustain a range of leisure and entertainment facilities, quality retail provision as well as new business opportunities, together with the supporting infrastructure that larger towns and competing centres have access to. It is also important to ensure that the town's economic prosperity grows, creating new jobs and spaces for new businesses. In addition, being a former New Town developed in a relatively short time span over 70 years ago, some areas of the town built using experimental materials and methods at that time and are beginning to show their age. These require regeneration and rejuvenation.

3.5 Moving forward, therefore, it is important that the Council maps out a pathway that looks to the future - to 2047, the 100th anniversary of the designation of Harlow New Town. Consequently we are developing a vision to set out how the town could develop based on what we know today and how we want the town to grow and develop over this period, reflecting the ambitions and aspirations of the community. This will be the 'Harlow @ 100' Vision that will adapt and evolve over time, reflecting Gibberd's quote that the town is "an organism which would go on changing and being rebuilt as the needs of the people altered".

3.6 A 'Harlow @100' vision has been developed to reflect what is happening in Harlow now and the elements we can comfortably predict in the future. This will be used as a basis for a unified cohesive future vision for the town and its hinterland, so all agencies and stakeholders are working towards the same goals, in the same direction, and to the same timetable.

Vision Statement

Harlow will be one of the best towns in Britain to raise your family and to send your children to school; the best place to start a business; the best place to live and to be a place of aspiration, innovation and prosperity for all. The town has faced challenging times recently, especially due to the impact of the COVID 19 pandemic on residents and businesses alike but through this vision the Council will ensure a sound platform is in place to aid Harlow's recovery and its future development and success. The vision provides a long term framework for the growth and regeneration of the town until 2047, drawing on what has been planned and achieved to date, which will evolve and develop over time to reflect our ambition and aspirations.

By 2047:

- *Harlow will have grown to the scale of a small city and will have shown growing prosperity*
- *A rebuild of the town centre will have taken place and a once-in-a-generation programme of neighbourhood renewal rolled out. Regeneration will have taken place and will continue at pace where needed*
- *Growth & prosperity will go hand in hand and the town centre will be a competitive retail centre and a place to work, live and spend leisure time*
- *Harlow will be an economic powerhouse in the East of England and UK Innovation Corridor, built on innovation, enterprise, life sciences and advanced manufacturing*
- *Harlow will have an excellent reputation due to its position as the heart of the UK Innovation Corridor creating the basis for sustained business investment*
- *Harlow will be at the centre of administration for the 'Greater Harlow' area*
- *Growth will be sustainable, planned and integrated with the existing town*
- *Growth will continue to be underpinned by Gibberd's New Town principles*

- *Growth will be matched by social and physical infrastructure at pace with new development*
- *Growth will continue to be managed by good governance and planning*
- *Harlow will be a beacon for sustainable development and beautiful design*
- *New buildings in Harlow will be recognised for being exemplary in terms of mitigating against and adapting to climate change, while existing buildings will have been retrofitted to ensure they are also playing their part*
- *Harlow will have an enviable sustainable transport network which will have brought about significant modal shift so that residents will be able to move around the town sustainably, by walking, cycling and by using exemplar public transport systems*
- *New businesses will be wanting to locate in Harlow, taking advantage of its location, facilities and skilled and flexible work force*
- *Thousands of new, high-skilled, long-term jobs, apprenticeships and training opportunities will be created increasing the productivity and output of Harlow's local economy and spreading opportunity and prosperity to Harlow residents*
- *Harlow will be a world class digital area with ultra-fast broadband linking seamlessly with residents, transport and business*
- *The Green Wedge and Green Finger network, as well as biodiversity assets, will have been retained and maintained to ensure Harlow's continued status as a 'green' town*
- *Every resident in the town will benefit from a renewed sense of pride in the appearance and function of the town centre, hatches, neighbourhood centres and estates*

Questions:

1. Do you agree with the vision for Harlow @100?
2. Do you agree that the vision should look to 2047 for Harlow?
3. Should the vision set out any other ambitions or priorities for Harlow to 2047?

If your answer is yes, please explain

4. What do you think the vision for the future of Harlow should be?

4. Managing growth to meet our needs

4.1 In the short to medium term, the existing town will continue to grow reflecting what is set out in the Harlow Local Development Plan with over 9,200 new homes planned to meet the town's identified need until 2033, together with land for

businesses to grow. This will be supported by a range of infrastructure as set out in the Local Plan. But we need to look beyond that date and determine the nature and shape of future growth to 2047 and how it should be delivered. In doing so we will have to consider range of issues, including future housing need and space to meet future job requirements, together with supporting infrastructure, balanced against the need to protect the environment.

4.2 Growth is already planned for the east, south and west of Harlow, which is in the adjoining Epping District, and largely beyond our control. We will seek to secure the right infrastructure (including social) solutions for these developments as the development moves forward, so the impact upon our town is minimised, and actively oppose development if it does not meet our criteria.

4.3 Similarly, growth to the north of the town, the seven Gilston villages, is more advanced and similarly beyond our control. Outline applications have been submitted and are due to be determined in the near future. We are actively engaged in securing the right infrastructure for these developments, before the homes are built, and to mitigate the impact of these developments on the town.

4.4 New communities will be integrated with the existing town through sustainable connections, and where possible bring positive benefits to Harlow residents through mutual access to community facilities and other infrastructure.

Questions:

5. Do you think future growth in Harlow should come forward through a mix of greenfield and brownfield sites, redevelopment of existing sites and both small and larger sites?

6. Do you think future growth in Harlow should come forward through a range of dwelling types including opportunities for more high-rise buildings/flats close to public transport and the town centre?

Please provide a reason for your answer.

5. Placeshaping and Placemaking

5.1 As the growth of Harlow continues, significant opportunities will arise to ensure something fantastic is created to provide a lasting legacy, and that the town is somewhere where people want to live, work in and spend their leisure time.

5.2 The Garden City principles, and the use of Harlow's new Design Guide, in new developments as part of the Harlow and Gilston Garden Town will contribute greatly to ensuring that new residential and commercial buildings in Harlow are beautiful, energy-efficient, accessible, safe and appealing to residents and visitors. It will also be important to ensure that the existing neighbourhoods and employment areas mirror the quality of these new developments.

5.3 New buildings in the town centre will include innovative design techniques, such as green walls, roof-top gardens, use of buildings for renewable energy

production (e.g. small wind turbines), with surrounding streets that work with, rather than against, new buildings. New development will also be adaptable so that it can change its use in the future.

5.4 Security and safety will be a key priority, so residents and visitors feel safe to be in the area, even at night and during other relatively quiet periods.

5.5 The Covid-19 pandemic has highlighted the importance of all residents having easy access to open spaces, so provision of usable and attractive open space in new developments will be a key element.

5.6 The Sustainable Transport Corridors, as well as enhancements to the existing footpaths, cyclepaths and bridleways, will help to deliver a modal shift in transport use to ensure people can easily and safely move around the town.

5.7 Sir Frederick Gibberd's original principles for the former New Town will be retained, so the Green Wedges, Green Fingers and other open spaces will be maintained, plus facilities and employment opportunities will be provided within walking distance for residents.

Questions:

7. What design principles should help shape Harlow as a place?

8. Should existing neighbourhoods and employment areas mirror the same quality, design and energy efficiency as new developments?

9. Do you agree that Sir Frederick Gibberd's principles should remain an essential element of Harlow New Town?

6. Housing Strategy

6.1 We want to be able to provide a wide range of housing that meets the needs of all our residents, including both market housing and a range of affordable options, as well as homes for older people and those with disabilities. An overarching aim is that thousands more Harlow residents will have their own home whether Council or privately owned.

6.2 Whilst current policy seeks 30% affordable housing, with a mix of tenures, the Council should consider both social housing and First Homes with the Council perhaps also as a developer and facilitator, not only within Harlow but also in adjoining areas.

6.3 An overarching housing strategy will be developed by the Council to consider this, setting out specific aspirations and then how they will be delivered over the period.

Question:

10. What types of housing do you think it is important to provide in Harlow?

7. Addressing Climate Change and Modal Shift

7.1 Recent events, both at the international and national level, together with more and more statistical evidence, demonstrate that climate change is a huge and urgent issue. We need to do all we can to minimise our carbon footprint. Harlow Council intends on being an exemplar in tackling climate change and commits to achieving Net Zero carbon emissions by 2040, in advance of Government targets, exploring the potential to achieve negative carbon status.

7.2 Sustainability in development: New buildings will, in accordance with the forthcoming revised Harlow Design Guide SPD, be able to mitigate against and adapt to the effects of climate change. This can be achieved in a number of innovative ways, including basic site design which ensures habitable rooms are south-facing (where possible) with deciduous trees which let in sunlight during the winter but provide shading in the summer. Buildings themselves can be designed in various ways to ensure they benefit as much as possible from passive heating, cooling and ventilation, which in turn reduces the carbon footprints and energy costs of buildings when they are in use. Consideration should be given to sustainable energy such as Photo Voltaic Cells and heat pumps.

7.3 Sustainability in transport: Car use will remain, albeit at a lower level and using cars which are increasingly electric or powered by hydrogen fuel. Policies and proposals will be in place to encourage people to change to electric and/or hybrid vehicles, and to get them out of cars onto bicycles and on foot, making use of the excellent footpath, world beating rebuilt cyclepath and bridleway network in Harlow, much of which is located in the town's Green Wedges and Green Fingers. Programmes are being developed to encourage use of eBikes and eScooters, where legislation permits, as well as enhancements to the cycle network, can also be used to assist with this. The Council is committing to delivering exemplar standards in its renewal and complete rebuilding of the pedestrian and cycling networks across the town.

7.4 A Transport Strategy has been produced for the Harlow and Gilston Garden Town. We will support this as part of the strategy to deliver modal shift and address climate change but still enable residents to use their cars when they need to.

Questions:

11. Do you support Harlow Council in achieving Net Zero carbon emissions in advance of Government targets?

12. Do you support measures that help to achieve sustainability in development and transport?

If your answer is no, please explain what measures could be in place.

8. Transport Infrastructure

8.1 Sustainable Transport Corridors will be integral to the aim to deliver modal shift and these will be in place when the new homes are built. The town will be interconnected with a world-beating cycle track network and leading the country in the creation of effective Sustainable Transport Corridors. We will be externally supported with fast and affordable rail links to London and other major regional hubs and enjoy less congested roads.

8.2 There is a necessity for a clean, modern, reliable, comfortable, attractive, frequent and affordable transport system, perhaps using electric or hydrogen-fuelled buses, for the benefit of new and existing residents and visitors for both leisure and work/commuting purposes.

8.3 We will work with the Harlow and Gilston Garden Town and Essex County Council to extend the transport network and facilitate how the improvements are going to be delivered and when.

8.4 Harlow needs better external connections as it grows. Looking forward, and in addition to the measures that are currently being developed, other initiatives will be considered including:

- The feasibility of an extension of the Central Line to Harlow
- Lobbying to extend London Transport zones to Harlow
- Examining connectivity to CrossRail 2
- Promoting Four-tracking of the mainline to Stansted and improving fast connections to Stansted airport for employment opportunities
- Working collaboratively with Hertfordshire and Essex County Councils in the development of HERT (Herts and Essex Rapid Transit system)
- Securing Public Transport links to Epping Underground station upgraded as part of the STC
- Extending the Overground network to Harlow

8.5 We will outline our specific aspirations in terms of external transport links and then lobby to be included and for investment to make them happen.

8.6 Harlow's cycle track network will be completely rebuilt to a world leading standard.

Questions:

13. Do you agree with the transport initiatives set out in this section of the Town Plan?

Can you suggest any other transport initiatives for Harlow especially those that will help support a shift towards more sustainable modes (walking, cycling, public transport)?

9. Town Centre

9.1 A key part of our growing town is the need to have a vibrant and modern heart which can compete successfully with other centres in the area, such as surrounding towns and large out of town shopping centres. We have ambitious plans for the regeneration and rebuilding of our town centre to ensure that Harlow is one of the best towns in Britain for leisure, hospitality, retail, culture, art and residential.

9.2 Existing planned residential growth through an increase in population will help to bring vibrancy by increasing spending and, therefore, increased investment into the town centre. This will improve activity and vitality and help deliver an improved day-time and new night-time economy.

9.3 A masterplan for the town centre is currently being produced to define what we want, which will lead to a new Supplementary Planning Document. Height will be a key consideration with the anticipation that the regeneration will include new tall buildings, which must be provided in accordance with the principles set out in the updated Design Guide for Harlow. The house types and tenures will be identified and will have consideration to the Local Plan and Housing Strategy (as set out above).

9.4 The emerging strategy for the town centre is for it to be developed around a series of 'quarters' and 'corridors', for example a Cultural Quarter around the Playhouse and other potential new developments in that area; a retail corridor running north from the Water Gardens to Sainsbury's through Broadwalk and an entertainment and hospitality quarter around the Market Square going west. These will be detailed in future policy documents, including the masterplan.

9.5 Harlow town centre will be thriving as one of the best places in the country to enjoy high-end retail, leisure, hospitality, arts and culture including a night time economy and an excellent quality of environment and public realm with people travelling to the town centre from other areas in the region to enjoy its offerings.

Questions:

14. Do you agree that the town centre should be developed into a series of areas, each with their own distinct use such as entertainment, eating, drinking and shopping?

If your answer is no, how do you think the Town Centre could be developed?

10. Stewardship

10.1 The driver that connects all of the objectives set out in the Garden Town vision is that of long term stewardship, in particular of the new developments in and around Harlow. The management of green spaces, play facilities and community buildings will be particularly important and we will ensure that this is factored into new development proposals through one legacy body providing unity and consistency across 'greater' Harlow. The objective is for new developments to

continue to provide a multitude of green spaces, common areas and community assets without the long term maintenance being a financial burden upon the Council.

Question:

15. How do you think that open spaces, leisure facilities and other community assets in Harlow could be managed in the future?

11. Leisure Provision & Open Spaces

11.1 Harlow was built with a network of open spaces which has evolved into the Green Wedges and Green Fingers from which the town greatly benefits today. The expansion of the town will continue to be along the same lines as designed by Sir Frederick Gibberd. This means the existing Green Wedge and Green Finger network will be enhanced and maintained, encouraging greater use of the footpaths, cycleways and bridleways which run through the network. Biodiversity assets, many of which are Local Wildlife Sites, will continue to be afforded protection, and new ones will be designated where appropriate.

11.2 The Council will review existing leisure facilities, including sports pitches and playing fields, to ensure that they meet the requirements of the town and its increased population.

11.3 Aside from open space based leisure, the arts in Harlow will continue to be a key attractor and the town will capitalise upon its Sculpture Town status through increased national recognition for our cultural assets. As part of the work on a town centre masterplan and other policy documents, the provision of a new theatre that can attract large touring West End shows or concerts will be explored.

Questions:

16. Do you agree that Green Wedges and Green Fingers should be included in new developments around the town?

17. Are there any sporting or leisure facilities that are lacking or require improvement in Harlow?

If your answer is yes, please provide examples:

12. Health & Wellbeing

12.1 The Health and wellbeing of residents is paramount, highlighted by the Covid-19 pandemic, and it will be built into all plans for development going forward.

12.2 With the UK Health Security Agency (formerly Public Health England) coming to Harlow, a brand new hospital being developed and the construction of the Harlow Innovation Park, which will be home to some of the world's leading businesses, Harlow will become the health-science capital of Europe.

12.3 In that vein, the development of new communities in and around Harlow will incorporate elements to promote the health and wellbeing of its residents. A strategy for this will be developed, detailing what elements will be included, building on the existing work completed by HGGT, and the focus of new alliances and partnerships between Harlow, ECC, the NHS, the new ICSs and the voluntary sector.

Questions:

18. Do you agree that the council should develop a Health and Wellbeing Strategy?

If your answer is yes, please provide examples of what could be included in the strategy which would help improve health and wellbeing in your community?

13. Neighbourhood Regeneration

13.1 Following a once-in-a-generation programme of neighbourhood renewal of our estates, hatches, neighbourhood centres and assets, employment areas, leisure and cultural assets and key infrastructure, Harlow's neighbourhoods will be injected with a new lease of life to mirror the anticipated quality of development and life envisaged for the wider Harlow & Gilston Garden Town and absolutely in accordance with the Gibberd principles, restoring pride in all corners of the existing town boundary.

Question:

19. What improvements would you like to see made to your local neighbourhood centre, hatches or the street you live in?

14. Library Strategy

14.1 Libraries are important focal points for communities. They are not just libraries - they are community assets providing a range of services and amenities. With a growing town we need to ensure all residents can access library services, while considering what services libraries provide and what their future role is in the community. We need to develop a long term strategy with Essex County Council so that we can meet the town's needs.

14.2 An upgrade of the existing town centre library is about to start and will run in parallel with conversations regarding the longer term needs of the library.

Questions:

20. Do you agree that there needs to be a longer-term strategy for library provision in Harlow?

Please provide ideas as to how libraries could be improved in Harlow.

15. Harlow & Gilston Garden Town (HGGT)

15.1 After many years of planning, the next phase of the HGGT will be its delivery. The Council will take a lead role, given its location at the heart of the HGGT, and will continue to be key in the moulding of our town going forward. The HGGT board will become smaller and more focused on delivery and strategic co-ordination and the development of a legacy trust to take care of stewardship of the new communities around the town.

16. Harlow Growth Board

16.1 The Harlow Growth Board is a partnership of key stakeholders from public, private and third sector which have a strong presence in Harlow. The Board will have the necessary oversight and provide strategic direction for the town's growth and prosperity. It will support the development and implementation of the Town Investment Plan (TIP) and help to coordinate a range of projects that are due to take place within Harlow including the relocation of the UK Health Security Agency, and the delivery of the Harlow Innovation Park and Enterprise Zone, HGGT and the new Princess Alexandra Hospital.

16.2 The Harlow Growth Board has created a strong basis for partnership working in the town, mainly around bids for Government money such as the Towns and Levelling Up funds. This will continue into the future but its role will be expanded to include other elements of the growth of the town, it will become the sounding board for strategic growth for Harlow. It will also be at the forefront of the expansion of Anchor organisations, setting an example for other organisations to follow in terms of local jobs, local skills local supply chains and social value.

17. Procurement

17.1 Harlow Council will become an exemplar of public procurement, building in social value wherever possible, becoming one of those 'anchor organisations' and setting an example for others to follow. This will include local employment and skills, local supply chains and local investment, and the use of other anchor organisations to roll-out this example to the private sector.

Questions:

21. Do you have any suggestions for improvements to the way the council's buys goods and services?

22. How can local businesses and organisations be better considered in the council's procurement process?

18. Waste & Recycling

18.1 The growth of the town will place additional pressures on the existing Household Waste and Recycling Centre. The current recycling centre does not have the capacity and is probably not in the right place – we will look for an alternative site to be developed in partnership with Essex County Council.

Question:

23. Please provide any comments on waste and recycling services and facilities.

19. Promoting Harlow

19.1 Exciting things are happening in our town and there is huge potential for the future with Harlow Council and its partners co-operating to develop a massively ambitious garden town. What is being done is ground breaking, the partnership of five councils, the innovative policies being created and the approach to creating new communities is creating a template being watched by other garden communities in Essex and across the country. Harlow needs to be promoting what it has to offer and what it is achieving across the country, putting Harlow on the map and attracting interest and investment.

Questions:

24. How can the council and residents put Harlow 'on the map' and really promote the town, the facilities and services we have and the opportunities it provides?

25. What further information would you like to know about Harlow?

Now it's time to have your say!

You can either complete the survey in the autumn edition of Harlow Times and hand it into the Civic Centre or post to:

Town Plan
Harlow Council
Civic Centre
The Water Gardens
Harlow
Essex
CM20 1WG.

Alternatively, complete the survey at www.harlow.gov.uk/consultations, email your comments to: townplan@harlow.gov.uk, or write to us using the address above.

Please give your views by Sunday 16 January 2022.