



Agenda item:

Summary

Report for:	Strategic Planning & Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee
Date of meeting:	24th November 2021
Part:	1
If Part II, reason:	

Title of report:	Hemel Garden Communities Update Report
Contact:	Cllr Alan Anderson, Portfolio Holder for Planning and Infrastructure Responsible Officer: Tom Dewey, Interim Programme Director, Hemel Garden Communities Authors: Nathalie Bateman, Hemel Garden Communities Programme Manager Tom Dewey, Hemel Garden Communities Interim Programme Director
Purpose of report:	To update the Committee on the Hemel Garden Communities Programme and next steps.
Recommendations	To note the update and provide support for Hemel Garden Communities Programme.
Period for post project review	An annual review of the programme should be undertaken to keep informed.
Corporate objectives:	The Spatial Vision provides a framework of spatial principles to inform the transformation and growth of Hemel Hempstead in support of the following objectives: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A clean, safe and enjoyable environment: the Spatial Vision promotes a network of green routes to support healthy lifestyles and active travel, access to nature, and safe routes and spaces which are inclusive to all local communities. • Building strong and vibrant communities: the Spatial Vision's engagement methodology enabled local communities to help shape a vision which sets out principles to create and reinforce a series of distinct, walkable neighbourhoods centred around lively,

	<p>inclusive local centres with an offer of leisure, retail, employment opportunities, business space, culture and community facilities to meet the needs of local communities. Hemel’s communities will be connected and engaged to be active participants in the transformation of the town, including through cultural activity, public art, knowledge and skills sharing.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensuring economic growth and prosperity: the Spatial Vision provides a framework to diversify Hemel Hempstead’s employment offer and improve the resilience and sustainability of its economy, through localising supply chains, building skills, and implementing a circular economy, digital connectivity and innovative technologies that build on the growth of Hertfordshire Innovation Quarter to benefit existing businesses and the whole of Hemel Hempstead and the surrounding area. • Providing good quality affordable homes: the Spatial Vision sets a framework for delivery of new neighbourhoods with a mix of tenures including 40% affordable homes. • Ensuring efficient, effective and modern service delivery: the Spatial Vision promotes innovative methods of engaging communities and use of digital technologies in the design and development of Hemel Garden Communities. This was commenced through engagement on the Spatial Vision itself, which made use of digital methods to overcome social distancing and reach more children and young people. Running throughout the Spatial Vision are opportunities for community collaboration, leadership and stewardship to ensure that places meet the needs of the communities they serve.
<p>Implications:</p> <p>‘Value for money’ implications</p>	<p><u>Financial</u></p> <p>None directly associated with this report.</p> <p><u>Value for money</u></p> <p>External support the programme has been through a formal procurement process where value for money considerations were reflected in the scoring criteria.</p>
<p>Risk implications</p>	<p>Given the scale of future growth planned for Hemel Hempstead, it is critical that the HGC Programme can guide new development so that it responds to the needs of local communities and stakeholders, integrates new and existing communities and transforms the existing town of Hemel Hempstead, to meet the Garden Communities programme aspirations.</p>

Community Impact Assessment	<p>The Council has undertaken a Community Impact Assessment (CIA) for the Hemel Garden Communities Spatial Vision in December 2020.</p> <p>The HGC Spatial Vision forms part of the Draft Local Plan's Hemel Garden Communities Delivery Strategy. A full Sustainability Appraisal/Strategic Environmental Assessment (SA/SEA) is being carried out on the new draft Dacorum Local Plan which looks at social, environmental and economic impacts in detail and will be scrutinised at the future Local Plan examination by an independent inspector. The Council has also undertaken a CIA on the draft Local Plan.</p>
Health and safety Implications	<p>The masterplanning and design quality framework provided by the Spatial Vision will promote the physical and mental wellbeing of Hemel Hempstead's communities, and create safe, vibrant places.</p>
Consultees:	<p>The following organisations and panels have been consulted on the content of this report:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • HGC Partners comprised of officers and Members from Dacorum, St Albans, Hertfordshire County Council • HGC Delivery Board • HGC Councillor Visioning Group
Background papers:	<p>Hemel Garden Communities Spatial Vision Cabinet report December 2020</p>
Glossary of acronyms and any other abbreviations used in this report:	<p>DBC – Dacorum Borough Council</p> <p>DLA – David Lock Associates</p> <p>HGC – Hemel Garden Communities</p> <p>LEP – Hertfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership</p> <p>TCPA - Town and County Planning Association</p>

1.0 Introduction

1.1 Dacorum Borough Council, St Albans City and District Council, Hertfordshire County Council, Hertfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) and The Crown Estate are working in partnership to deliver HGC, a major expansion of Hemel Hempstead bringing transformative benefits for the existing town.

1.2 Hemel Hempstead was awarded Garden Town Status from Government in March 2019 and the HGC programme is working under the Town and County Planning Association (TCPA) New Communities programme to deliver HGC.

1.3 The programme is supported by the HGC Memorandum of Understanding and the HGC Charter, which sets out nine place-making principles, and is driven by a

mission statement to *'take the best of the New Town heritage into the 21st century...anchoring the transformation of Hemel Hempstead and the wider area.'*

- 1.4 Hemel Garden Communities includes new development and transformation proposals for the town and wider connections. The catalyst for transformation of the wider town and its connections is the North and East of Hemel Hempstead Growth Areas, where housing growth is divided roughly equally between Dacorum and St Albans districts and the majority of the employment growth is located in St. Albans district – see Appendix 1 HGC Programme Area. All other development proposed for Hemel Garden Communities in the town of Hemel Hempstead set out in Dacorum's draft Local Plan will be supporting and shaping the transformation agenda either on site and/or through developer contributions. The proposals include a range of sites, some of which have been allocated in the adopted Local Plan whilst others will be allocated in emerging or future Local Plans or are simply windfall.

2.0 Programme Update

- 2.1 Significant progress has been made on the Hemel Garden Communities Programme over 2021. As well as seeing a number of key workstreams being activated and progressed

Spatial Vision

- 2.2 The Spatial Vision has now been published. It builds on Hemel Hempstead's strengths and explains how HGC will look and feel once the development and transformation is complete. It provides a locally specific narrative and framework to guide the transformation of Hemel Hempstead and its strategic growth.
- 2.3 The new development will be delivered in phases via the development management process. The ability of phased development to contribute to the HGC Programme's specific Garden Communities aspirations for Hemel Hempstead and the surrounding area relies on having the compelling and coherent vision, encapsulating both the TCPA's Garden City Principles and Hemel Hempstead's unique growth potential, which is provided by the Spatial Vision.
- 2.4 The joint Dacorum and St Albans Strategic (Sites) Design Guide sets the Authorities' general expectations for best practice, high quality design, and sets out a design process to achieve these. In this context, the Spatial Vision will ensure that development proposals, designed in accordance with the Strategic Design Guide, achieve the specific Garden Communities ambitions for the growth and transformation of the town.
- 2.5 The status of the Spatial Vision is consolidated through the Authorities' emerging Local Plan policies and the joint Dacorum and St Albans Strategic (Sites) Design Guide. The HGC Programme partners will work collaboratively and put in place the appropriate legal mechanisms to ensure that each phase contributes towards the Spatial Vision's aspirations for the quality of new growth and the transformation of the existing town.
- 2.6 The HGC Spatial Vision will be used to:

- Guide the HGC Programme and preparation of key studies: the HGC Framework Plan, Hemel Garden Communities Transformation Plan, HGC Infrastructure Delivery Plan and HGC Programme Delivery Plan.
- Inform design and infrastructure requirements as part of the determination of planning applications for HGC.
- Provide direction for further evidence base work, studies and strategies required to support the HGC Programme framework (in the 'Delivery' chapter of the Spatial Vision).
- The HGC Spatial Vision consists of an overarching Spatial Vision, which is broken down into four Pillars with individual spatial visions and spatial principles and overarching themes supporting healthy lifestyles and climate resilience. Each Pillar is supported with best practice examples from Hemel Hempstead, the wider area and beyond, and a 'delivery' list of studies and next steps.

The Four Pillars are:

- *A Green Network* - A network of green and blue routes, travel and places will support healthy lifestyles, biodiversity, climate resilience, environmental sustainability and the wellbeing of local communities.
- *Integrated Neighbourhoods* – A series of walkable neighbourhoods, connected to each other, each with individual distinct identities, exemplar design and sustainability standards, centred upon lively, inclusive local centres.
- *A Self-sustaining Economy* - Innovation in sustainability, circular economy principles and digital connectivity will be key employment drivers in Hemel Garden Communities and provide a strong theme for the economic identity of the town.
- *Engaged Communities* – Connected and engaged communities will be active participants in the transformation of Hemel Garden Communities. Cultural and heritage activity, public art, knowledge and skill exchange and enterprise will all play a role, now and in the long term.

2.7 The Spatial Vision has now been published and is being used as guiding principles to develop other key workstream activities.

Transport Plan

2.8 The emerging HGC Transport Plan sets out a vision for sustainable transport in Hemel Garden Communities. *By 2050, existing and new neighbourhoods will be connected to each other and to Herts IQ by strategic movement corridors. These will reduce the need to travel by car and provide high-quality, innovative and well-placed bus, rail, walking, cycling and micro-mobility options for all.*

2.9 The bold ambition will be delivered by designing transport improvements which apply the following user hierarchy, designed to first minimise the need to travel, and then make active and sustainable modes the natural choices for everyday trips:

1. Reduce the need to travel
2. Active travel (walking, cycling, e-bikes and e-scooters)
3. Accessible passenger transport (buses, demand responsive services, trains)
4. Other motor vehicles (shared Car Club vehicles, car sharing, private car use)

- 2.10 New neighbourhoods will be designed to include facilities that reduce the need to travel, including high speed internet to allow flexibility in work locations. Active and sustainable modes will be prioritised through convenience, making them the default choices for residents when leaving their home. To achieve this outcome, the active travel network will need to be the most direct and convenient journey option for most local trips by most people. This is likely to mean that active travel options will need to become the quickest method for completing 'everyday' journeys – both for new and existing residents of Hemel Hempstead.
- 2.11 Passenger transport stops and stations will be conveniently placed and of high quality, with priority routes along key corridors ensuring rapid journey times to key destinations that would otherwise be challenging to reach using active travel modes. Mobility hubs of varying size will seamlessly join-up active and passenger transport options; with complimentary facilities available to ensure that interchange creates opportunities for retail, work, and leisure activities that make these journeys more enjoyable and productive.
- 2.12 All locations will continue to be accessible by private car, however motorised vehicle access is likely to be via more circuitous routes than are available for people using active and sustainable transport options. Mobility hubs will generally be sited closer to key destinations than parking for private motorised vehicles. Areas facilitating accessible pick-up/drop-off, and spaces for people with more complex mobility needs that require parking close to their destination, will be provided.
- 2.13 Achieving the ambition set out within the Transport Plan is focussed around the following 'Big Moves':
- Active Travel Network
 - Transport Interchanges
 - Hertfordshire and Essex Rapid Transit (HERT)
 - Bus Network Improvements
 - Future Mobility
- 2.14 A draft Transport Plan for Hemel Garden Communities has been prepared and is in the process of review and development prior to initial public engagement in during early 2022. The initial engagement will be to engage the public is a series of key questions which will aim to test the principles, aims and objectives put forward in the draft plan, to inform further development of proposals ahead of a second round of more detailed public engagement later in 2022.
- 2.15 A number of further detailed studies are planned to commence upon completion of the Transport Plan, including those which will look at the network of multi-modal transport interchanges, parking and movement, sustainable transport corridor feasibility studies and the HGC green loop from the spatial vision.

Framework Plan

- 2.16 The HGC Framework Plan is a concept plan covering the HGC Programme Area, taking its lead from the Spatial Vision and emerging Transport Plan as a well as relevant planning considerations to develop a Spatial Plan for development and infrastructure in the HGC Growth Area. The main focus will be on North and East of Hemel Hempstead Growth Areas and the linked infrastructure needed to support the town and wider key connections.

- 2.17 The majority of the plan will be delivered by David Lock Associates (DLA) who have been appointed by The Crown Estate on behalf of the strategic landowners. The study is being supported by a collaborative working partnership with the authorities and other strategic landowners (Bloor, Pidgeon Ltd and Kitewood), where the HGC programme team are taking a leading role in steering the development of the plan.
- 2.18 The authorities, DLA and The Crown Estate are working to an agreed scope to ensure the plan aligns with the Spatial Vision and other workstreams, and a collaborative Steering Group is in operation to oversee progress on the workstream, within the overarching HGC Governance Structure.
- 2.19 The HGC Team has engaged with a range of groups as part of the early stages of work in developing the Framework Plan, including the HGC Councillor Visioning Group, Ward and Parish Councils, Community Review Panel as a range of technical offers workshops across the partnership. The scope ensures we have a plan that delivers a strong Supplementary Planning Document that can be fed into the new Dacorum Local Plan and it is anticipated that the Framework Plan will be delivered in mid-2022.

Infrastructure Study

- 2.20 HGC requires an overarching Infrastructure Study to ensure we have a robust understanding of the big infrastructure asks required to deliver the level of growth proposed, and to deliver on the Garden Communities vision and aspirations arising from the Transport Plan and Framework Plan. The Study will set out what is required, how much the infrastructure will cost, how it will be delivered and paid for, over what timescales (and linked to development phases), and what legal and planning mechanisms will need to be in place to deliver an appropriate s106 agreement with the strategic landowners and in a cross-boundary context. This work builds on the existing infrastructure evidence prepared by DBC and SADC for their respective local plans, and importantly fills in any gaps.
- 2.21 An Infrastructure Working Group made up of the HGC partner authorities has been established to oversee the preparation of Infrastructure Study, Strategic Viability Appraisal and Delivery Strategy, focusing on filling in any gaps in existing evidence and ensuring alignment between the HGC programme and the Infrastructure Delivery Plans being prepared for the St Albans and Dacorum Local Plans.

Communications and Engagement

- 2.22 A HGC Engagement Strategy has been in development over the last year, and is now nearing completion. The purpose of the Strategy is to set out the principles, aims and objectives which all engagement activities planned for HGC should strive to meet, whoever is leading on them (be it the authorities, landowners or other stakeholders). A driving principle for the Strategy is for all our communications and engagement activities across the partnership and stakeholders to create a clear narrative – a single story for HGC. This is critical to building understanding and support for the Programme and to mitigate the risk of confusion or consultation fatigue for the public.
- 2.23 To this end, the Strategy provides a high level plan of engagement activities which will be taking place over the next 12 to 24 months – an Engagement

Timeline - as well as a Communications Plan which sets out proposals and process for social media, press briefings and publications.

2.24 Supporting the Strategy is a collection of Guidance Sheets setting out what we expect good engagement to look like for different types of activities, ranging from public consultations and surveys to webinars, workshops and videos. A branding and style guide will also be available, once this is complete (see below for more information).

2.25 As an overarching engagement method, 'Hemel Channel', an Instagram-based social media channel was created and now has over 700 subscribers. The Instagram site is being used by the HGC Programme team and the public to engage on activities and events but also as a virtual space to discuss programme matters.

2.26 The Hemel Channel acts as a central communications platform to keep members of the public up to date throughout a two-phase programme of engagement activities. The first phase engaged communities and stakeholders to gain a greater understanding the place, and the second phase enabled these groups to contribute to shaping the Spatial Vision in a hands-on way.

Resourcing and Team Changes

2.27 Significant activity has been undertaken with regard to recruitment to Hemel Garden Communities resourcing. This is in recognition of the need to bolster resource in order to move forward with the range of work across the programme. The following roles have been appointed to:

- HGC Programme Manager
- Communications and Engagement Officer
- Senior Programme Delivery Officer

2.28 Recruitment to the HGC Programme Director role is currently being undertaken.

3.0 Next Steps

3.1 The following Member engagement activities are planned between November 2021 and February 2022.

Forum	Purpose
Dacorum Strategic Planning and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee – 24th November 2021	Annual update on Hemel Garden Communities Programme
SADC – Local Plan Advisory Group – 30th November 2021	Overview of Hemel Garden Communities Programme
HGC Councillor Visioning Group – w/c 13th December 2021	Framework Plan, Transport Plan briefings, Engagement Strategy and branding and website proposals
Member webinar – w/c 13th December 2021	Briefing on HGC with a focus on Sustainable Transport (external speakers)
HGC Board Topic Session – Transport, date TBC	Focus upon Transport Plan

Dacorum Cabinet – expected January 2022	Transport Plan consultation proposals
HGC Delivery Board – expected February 2022	Framework Plan – Stage 1 Review Engagement Strategy – Sign-off

Appendix 1 HGC Programme Area



