

Committee(s): Planning and Licensing Committee	Date: 11 March 2022
Subject: Dunton Hills Garden Village Planning Application Update (Ref. 21/01525/OUT)	Wards Affected: West Horndon
Report of: Phil Drane, Corporate Director (Planning & Economy)	Public
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Summary

This update to members describes current progress with the emerging planning policy framework for the redevelopment of the proposed allocation site at Dunton Hills Garden Village, as well as an update on the current outline planning application for the majority part of the land within it. This report accompanies a presentation that will be provided to members at committee.

Main Report

Introduction and Background

1. Dunton Hills Garden Village is the largest single development site in the borough. The development will accommodate substantial housing (4,000 new homes) and employment (5 hectares of employment land and local workspaces, shops and facilities) development in a landscape-led sustainable community that includes the provision of supporting community infrastructure.
2. The project to progress the garden village scheme through both the plan-making (allocation) and decision-making (application) processes is managed as a corporate priority. This is set out in the Council's corporate strategy and supported by a project governance framework. This includes partnership working with several stakeholders, such as CEG (majority land controller), Essex County Council and Homes England (who have provided grant funding for the project on behalf of Government following formal garden village designation in 2017).
3. Progress has been made along three key strands, including a current outline planning application (Ref. 21/01525/OUT) that is expected to be presented to the Planning and Licensing Committee for decision later this year, pending outstanding matters being addressed.

4. This report provides members with an update on current progress, including an explanation of the submitted planning application in advance of future consideration.

Issue, Options and Analysis of Options

5. In terms of plan-making, members will be aware of current progress on the emerging Local Plan, which since 2020 has been subject to public examination including hearing sessions and a consultation on modifications to the plan. The appointed planning inspectors recently issued their final report concluding that the plan is sound subject to modifications. The final version of the plan is set to be the subject of an Extraordinary Council meeting on 23 March 2022 to decide on its adoption. The plan includes site-specific policies for Dunton Hills Garden Village.
6. Alongside the proposed strategic allocation of the development site, emerging site-specific supplementary planning guidance to assist with the assessment of detailed planning proposals (such as Reserved Matters applications) has been progressed. A Framework Masterplan Document and a detailed design guidance Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) were consulted upon during 2021. Officers are currently considering amendments to the SPD as a result of consultation responses that were received last summer. A final version of the SPD will be brought to members for adoption at a future Policy, Resources & Economic Development Committee.
7. In terms of decision-making, a parallel planning workstream for the garden village project concerns Development Management. Following an extensive period of pre-application discussions and Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Scoping, the landowners and the site promoter of the majority landholding within the allocation submitted an outline planning application last September (Ref. 21/01525/OUT). So far, the application has been consulted upon twice (the second round of consultation was triggered by the applicants' submission of further information).
8. The consultation responses received and the assessment of the submitted Environmental Statement have highlighted that there are several technical issues that still need to be clarified and resolved. This is anticipated to involve substantial work over the coming months, which will concern the Council's team of planning officers and consultants, the applicant's project team and a number of key stakeholders such as Essex County Council and National Highways.
9. The applicant has entered into a Planning Performance Agreement (PPA) with the Council. This agreement includes a preliminary timetable for the determination of the application, based on a basic understanding of the likely

process leading to a decision via the Planning and Licensing Committee and the negotiation of associated legal agreements. In the PPA timetable, these two milestones are noted for June 20220 and September 2022 respectively. The programme so far has incurred minor delays due to the ongoing assessment of consultation responses and the EIA, and the applicant's responses. It may be anticipated that some further delays to the programme may occur as current outstanding matters are being re-assessed in light of additional submitted information, and subsequently discussed and addressed, which will also likely involving further consultation. Further information regarding the detail of the application and the ongoing assessment process is provided at Appendices A, B and C.

10. The applicant has announced that a separate parallel planning application is imminently to be submitted to Basildon Borough Council, for the improvement of a pedestrian/cycle and potentially emergency vehicle route into the south-eastern part of the development site, along Church Lane. Officers will anticipate Basildon's consultation notice and will engage as appropriate with this process to facilitate the delivery of the allocation site.
11. Other main landholdings within the allocation site need to play their part in the delivery of the new Garden Village. Officers have been in regular contact with the promoters and/or landowners of the main landholdings since the inception of the proposed garden village. Once a decision has been made regarding the adoption of the Local Plan, Officers plan discussions with them to bring forward all the components of the allocation site.

Consultation

12. Past and future consultation requirements for the respective workstreams have been referenced above.

References to Corporate Plan

13. The Dunton Hills Garden Village project cuts across all five of the Corporate Strategy key priorities and is specifically mentioned as an objective under growing our economy. Project accountability includes regular reporting through the Council's programme board to the senior leadership team.

Implications

Financial Implications

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14. There are no specific financial implications regarding the current outline planning application for Dunton Hills Garden Village. The wider project is supported by Homes England garden community capacity funding as well as through relevant Council budgets. An outcome from the bid made for further capacity funding in 2022/23 is awaited.

Legal Implications

Name & Title: Amanda Julian, Corporate Director (Law & Governance) and Monitoring Officer

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15. There are no legal implications arising from this report. Legal input is being provided to the wider project as arranged through the governance framework.

Economic Implications

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16. Dunton Hills Garden Village provides a significant opportunity for economic growth, both in terms of long-term employment provision and short-term construction related jobs (including supply chain etc). Delivery of the site is a central part of the Council's corporate priority to grow the economy.

Other Implications (where significant) – i.e. Health and Safety, Asset Management, Risk Management, Section 17 – Crime & Disorder, Sustainability, ICT.

17. Members will be involved with upcoming key decisions regarding the garden village, notably the adoption of the Local Plan, the Dunton Hills Garden Village Design Guidance SPD, and the determination of the current outline planning application. Members will be informed in due course of the eventual Planning and Licensing Committee date for the current planning application.

Background Papers

- Item 747, Policy Resources and Economic Development Committee, Dunton Hills Garden Village Design Guidance Supplementary Planning Document, 17 March 2021
- Item 430, Policy Resources and Economic Development Committee, Local Development Plan and Dunton Hills Garden Village Update, 18 March 2020

Appendices to this report

- Appendix A: Planning Application (Ref. 21/01525/OUT)
- Appendix B: Planning Application Summary Document (CEG, August 2021)
- Appendix C: Plans/Drawings and Documents