

Examination Office
[REDACTED]

Via email: [REDACTED]

Friday 11th October 2019

Harlow Local Development Plan Examination: Garden Town Infrastructure Delivery Plan and Garden Town Strategic Viability Assessment

Dear Mr Reed,

The Canal & River Trust (the Trust) is the guardian of 2,000 miles of historic waterways across England and Wales. We are among the largest charities in the UK. Our vision is that “living waterways transform places and enrich lives”.

The Trust is the owner and navigation authority of the River Stort and adjacent towpath which runs along the northern side of the local development plan area.

We have reviewed the Garden Town Infrastructure Delivery Plan and Garden Town Strategic Viability Assessment. We do not have any specific comments to make on the Garden Town Strategic Viability Assessment.

Garden Town Infrastructure Delivery Plan

We have recently commented on the two planning applications related to the new River Stort crossings (Alterations to the existing Fifth Avenue road/rail bridge LPA ref 3/19/1046/FUL, our ref CRTR-PLAN-2019-27510 and the new Eastern River Stort Crossing LPA ref 3/19/1051/FUL, our ref CRTR-PLAN-2019-27513). The responses to the new crossings, along with our response to the outline plan for the new villages (LPA ref 3/19/1045/OUT our ref CRTR-PLAN-2019-27507) are attached.

3.3.1 Housing Infrastructure Fund (page 14)

We agree that in order for the Harlow and Gilston Garden Town to be successful, investment in sustainable transport corridors *including* the River Stort towpath (width and surface), access points to the towpath and wayfinding will be necessary to support active travel.

3.5.3 River Stort Crossings (page 16)

As well as the River Stort Crossings, the River Stort towpath itself should be supported as an active travel route. Villages 1, 2, 5 and 6 of the Gilston Garden Town are around 1km from our network (approximately 10 minutes' walk or 7 minutes to cycle), with Villages 3 and 4 being around 2.5km from our network. Towpaths make excellent places for people to walk and cycle considerably. Not only is this a recreational resource, it can be an attractive commuter route, reducing congestion, carbon emissions and poor air quality in the

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wider area and supporting people to lead healthier lives. The towpath acts as a key east to west route away from roads and provides good access to Harlow Station.

Given the proximity of the new villages to our network and the likelihood that the development would result in many additional users of our towpath for recreation and commuting, we would towpath, wayfinding and access point improvements to ensure that the canal corridor is able to cope with the additional expectations and burdens.

Promotion and improvement of walking and cycling routes alongside waterways is consistent with Policy TRA1 Sustainable Transport (c) of the East Herts District Plan 2018, which specifically includes reference to paths alongside waterways:

"Ensure that a range of sustainable transport options are available to occupants or users, which may involve the improvement of pedestrian links, cycle paths, passenger transport network (including bus and/or rail facilities) and community transport initiatives. These improvements could include the creation of new routes, services and facilities or extensions to existing infrastructure and which may incorporate off-site mitigation, as appropriate. In suitable cases the provision of footways and cycle paths alongside navigable waterways may be sought, along with new moorings, where appropriate..."

This is further supported by points in Policy GA1 (The Gilston Area) V (I), which require the provision of sustainable transport measures which encourage walking and cycling including *"the provision of cycleways and footways that provide links throughout the site and into Harlow"* and *"enhancement of existing bridleways and footpaths"*.

4.9.2 Transport Apportionment (page 31)

The Trust's agreement for the use of its land and airspace above the River Stort will be required for the new crossings and the payment of a premium will be required consistent with the requirements of the Charities Act. As the bridges affect our Infrastructure Trust Property, approval from the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs will also be required. To date, no meaningful engagement about an agreement with the Trust has taken place.

If you have any queries please contact me, my details are below.

Yours faithfully,

Tessa Craig

Area Planner



<https://canalrivertrust.org.uk/specialist-teams/planning-and-design>