

Gilston Area Steering Group Meeting

Thursday 19th December 2019 -16:00

East Herts Council Offices

# Minutes

**Present**:

**EHC**

Cllr Linda Haysey (LH) (Chair) - Leader (EHC)

Richard Cassidy (RC) – Chief Executive

Adam Halford (AH) – Project Officer

Kevin Steptoe (KP) – Garden Town Project Lead

Karen Page (KP) - Place Making & Growth Officer

Karen Lee (KL) (minutes) –Project Co-ordinator (Gilston Area)

**HCC**

Cllr Eric Buckmaster (EB) – Sawbridgeworth Division HCC

& Hunsdon Ward District (EHC)

**Parish Councils**

Bob Toll (BT) Chair - Hunsdon Parish Council (HPC)

Mark Orson (MO) Chair Eastwick & Gilston Parish Council

**Developers**

Paul Mumford (PM) – Places for People (PfP)

**Guests**

Alastair Wilson (AW) – Environment Agency

Patrick Campbell (PC) – Affinity Water

**Apologies:**

Mary Parsons (MP) - Places for People (PfP)

Anthony Bickmore (AB) Chair - Hunsdon, Eastwick & Gilston

Joint Neighbourhood Planning Group (NPG)

Chris Lovegrove (CL) – City & Provincial Properties (CPP)

Clair Hamilton (CH) – HGGT Director

Jill Buck (JB) Chair – Widford Parish Council (WPC)

David Sprunt (DS) –Transport Strategy & Infrastructure (ECC)

Natalie Hayward (NH) – Principal Planning Officer (Major Developments

and New Communities (ECC)

Danny Purton (DP) – Harlow District Council

Kate Collins – Personal Assistant (EHC)

Rich Cook (RC) - ECC

Tom Payne (TP) – High Wych Parish Council (HWPC)

Patsy Dell (PD) – Hertfordshire County Council (HCC)

Simon Pipe (SP) – Customer & Media Services Manager (HC)

Claire Sime (CS) – Service Manager, Policy & Implementation

# Welcome & Apologies

* 1. LH welcomed everyone to the meeting and introduced guest attendees Alastair Wilson (AW) from the Environment Agency, who have responsibilities for managing the Water Abstraction Licencing and also for Drought Coordination for the area and working on sustainable water reduction programmes, and Patrick Campbell (PC) from Affinity Water, who are the local water supplier, to speak to the Gilston Area Steering Group on water management and how this is planned for in new developments including the Gilston Area.
  2. AH confirmed apologies received as set out above.

# Water Resources discussion

## Environment Agency

* + 1. AW outlined that the Environment Agency, water companies, Planning Authorities, Developers and the customers all have roles and responsibilities in water management and how water is used.
    2. AW explained that water companies have to produce Water Resource Management Plans which are used to assess the water needed to supply its customers and this is a statutory requirement where water companies have to look 25 years ahead and review the plans regularly on a five year basis and take into account changes in the landscape, the environment, development proposals, demands on the system, households they have available and what is required to meet any future demands.
    3. AW pointed out that the water companies also have to prepare Drought Plans and look to see how to maintain supplies and what action is needed on drought conditions. AW further indicated that droughts will always occur and are a natural event and are dependent on climatic patterns. They may occur more frequently or have longer gaps between them. EA needs to be prepared to manage this situation so there is water available for use and the implications on the environment considered at the same time.
    4. AW explained that the Water Framework Directive (WFD) which is European legislation asks that all member states produce River Basin Management Plans that look holistically at bringing together all the environmental pressures on water bodies or river catchments or river areas and make an assessment of where they are; what are their classification; and what are their status. And if their status is not good what is needed to change and move them towards being good. There are certain timelines to achieve certain actions and there are a number of challenges in this area which are not all related to water resources. There are water quality issues and there are structural issues. There is a plan broken down into different water bodies.
    5. AW indicated that they also have abstraction licenses strategies which includes how enquiries are managed, permission to extract water from the environment, where permission might be allowed, type of permission given, type of conditions placed on those and areas where permission might not be allowed for the extraction of more water.
    6. The Environment Agency (EA) prepares Drought plans which are also produced both as a National organisation and an area wide organisation to manage drought conditions. AW stated that where there are different weather patterns then different climatic issues have to be managed at the same time which can be difficult based on how messages are communicated via the media.
    7. AW pointed out that Local Authorities have a role to play as competent authorities in making planning decisions and the Environment Agency (EA) will feed in and provide technical advice for those. Nearly all of us will be supplied by a water company so there has to be accountability on how the water supplied to us is used.
    8. AW explained that there are future looking plans which assess what water is needed and how to achieve the required goals. The EA have a relationship with Ofwat, government department for the water and sewerage industry which is responsible for approving the reasonable costs that water companies, such as Affinity Water, may charge for

water including from customers and new supply connection costs which is then used by water companies to maintain the necessary supply and improve infrastructure. AW indicated that Thames Water is the sewerage treatment company for the local area and is responsible for managing sewage capacity.

* + 1. AW further explained that all water companies have a drought plan. For each area, the Environment Agency have a drought plan which is regularly reviewed and considers lessons learnt after each drought to inform changes required and improvements to be made.
    2. In respect to the Environment Agency there are specific legislative procedures that covers the local water companies and the process for abstraction permissions required to maintain supplies.
    3. BT enquired on the definition of a drought.
    4. AW in the presentation, showed an infrastructure map which indicated the location of abstraction points (boreholes) for public supply, major sewage works and surface water abstraction points.
    5. AW explained that the East of England receives less rain fall compared with the West of England.
    6. AW pointed out that the East is highly populated and has higher consumption rates in terms of domestic water supply and water usage compared to the availability of water. The East of England also has some of the highest consumption rates per dwelling in the country based on social and economic reasons. For this reason the East of England is prone to what is called Water Stress.
    7. AW stated that the EA looks at the relation between the demand (current and future) for water and the recorded or anticipated effective rainfall and the likely implication this has for deficit in water, its implications and what actions are required.
    8. AW pointed out that where there is evidence of water stress, universal metering can be used although these are often optional to users. AW stated that for residents, water supplies have just always been there and may have been taken for granted and it is a vital resource as part of our existence. Potentially it should be considered in the same way as we consider other utilities.
    9. AW explained that ‘Effective rainfall’ is the amount of rain that soaks into the chalk and anything that happens with the water table will influence its relationship with the chalk streams and could also be influenced by artificial activities, abstraction, discharges, operation of structures and other things done to modify the water courses.
    10. AW stated that the current Hertfordshire drought status is caused by a long period of reduced effective rainfall over the last 3 to 4 yrs and the delay in water filtering into chalk for long periods.
    11. AW indicated that it will take time for the resilience of the system to recover from the drought periods, however, the recovery has started and will need more good (rainy) weather to improve.
    12. BT inquired as to the confidence in the recovery system of the water levels continuing as evidence shows a decline in the water patterns.
    13. AW stated that no one can guarantee future rainfall but using past records it can be predicted by looking at patterns.
    14. AW informed that the EA does scenario planning and looks at how best to build in resilience to ensure water supplies are maintained.
    15. MO noted the major development in the Southeast and the potential number of new residents in the area over the next 10 year. MO asked about the impact on the current water infrastructure when moving water around and the potential changes that needs to be made to ensure there is water supply to meet the demand.

## Affinity Water

* + 1. PC pointed out that Affinity Water is obliged to provide water to its existing customers and cannot be seen to constrain future housing development and therefore must consider future demand.
    2. PC stated that Affinity Water has in place a Water Resource Management Plan that includes a forward plan looking 25 years ahead on how to meet demand and how much water needs to be abstracted locally or brought in to the area and how it is treated and distributed.
    3. PC informed that Affinity Water extracts about 60-65% of water from chalk/boreholes and 35% from the River Thames at 3 different water treatment plants. About 900million litres of water is extracted per day supplying 3.3 million people in 1.5 million properties.
    4. MO enquired as to the forward planning of Affinity Water to meet future demands.
    5. PC informed that the future plan is forecasted up to 2045 and water will be imported from the West into the East to help meet demand alongside improvements in water efficiency and reductions in water leaks. There are no new abstraction supply sources planned but compulsory metering will be completed by around 2025 which releases up more water through reduced use.
    6. LH asked about the effectiveness of metering.
    7. PC advised that evidence shows on average a 12-15% reduction in usage after installing a meter.
    8. BT asked the asset management approach to dealing with leakage.
    9. PC explained that it is cheaper to repair leaks than to replace pipes as replacing puts significant costs onto customer bills which is not possible as these are restricted by Ofwat it is therefore more economical to invest in maintenance of the infrastructure as and when leaks are detected.
    10. PC indicated that better monitoring for and detection of leaks reduces the volume of water lost before a repair can be undertaken.
    11. BT enquired on the contingency plans for the system currently in place to cater for the constant repair and maintenance against an overall overhaul of the infrastructure.
    12. PC informed that Water Resource Plan includes a 10% headroom on top of modelling scenarios to reflect risk.
    13. PC advised that the Strategic option is a new reservoir in Abingdon, Oxfordshire linked to the River Severn and that no new boreholes are planned.
    14. KP enquired about rainwater harvesting in new developments and what impact this has.
    15. AW pointed out that periods of highest water demand occur when it is warmest and there is least amount of rainfall. Rainwater harvesting will be low in these periods; its fine for garden watering and can have a role in management of drainage but it cannot be used to supplement treated drinking water.
    16. AH suggested that grey water recycling might be more successful as it re-uses water for multiple purposes in the same property.
    17. AW outlined that important to water usage is behavioural change of users.
    18. PC pointed out that leakage is wastage for the supplier and whilst leakage can re-supply an aquifer it does not necessarily re-charge the borehole that delivers the supply as the water may have travelled a long distance and it represents a waste of the treatment of that water to make it suitable for drinking.
    19. MO requested that Thames Water be invited to give a presentation on waste water treatment.

**Action:** AH to invite Thames Water to next meeting.

# Minutes & actions of previous meeting

3.1 LH introduced the minutes of the last meeting of 9th October 2019.

3.2 The minutes were agreed as a correct record.

3.3 LH indicated the matter of engagement by the developer with the workstreams can be on the agenda for the next Garden Town Board meeting in February 2020.

3.4 PM indicated that there is a term of reference of the Joint Working Group that will be shared with the Steering Group.

**Action:** PM to share terms of reference of the Joint Working Group with Steering Group

3.5 LH suggested that it would be helpful for the minutes of the Joint Working group to be shared with The Steering Group for clarity of what the group is doing.

3.6 AH indicated that a draft cycle route strategy document has been prepared by Hertfordshire County Council for a potential route from Stansted Airport down to Broxborne which has been circulated for internal consultation.

**Action:** EB to follow up on the status of programme for the cycle route.

3.7 LH indicated that it would be good for the draft document of cycle connectivity to be shared with the Neighbourhood Planning Group as soon it can be made available.

3.8 AH pointed out that Hertfordshire County was contacted regarding the Minerals Local Plan and reported that the document has been delayed due to further archaeological investigation being required on the Briggens Estate proposed minerals site which is due to start in January 2020.

**Action:** EB to provide update of the Minerals Plan programme

3.9 AH indicated that arrangements have been made for Roydon Council to receive a copy of the Briggens Estate V7 planning application and copies of future Steering Group minutes.

# Harlow and Gilston Garden Town Update

4.1 KS informed that the Garden Town work has mostly been on establishing policy but is now moving to implementation. Timescales for programme of works should be available before the next HGGT board meeting at the beginning of February.

**Action:** KS to share HGGT Programme of works for next quarter to be shared at next meeting.

* + 1. KS communicated that Claire Hamilton (CH), Director of HGGT is presently out on sick leave and Tom Dewey is temporarily in post for the next couple of months.

## Transport Strategy

* + 1. KS advised that there will be a 6 weeks consultation on the Transport Strategy to commence mid-January 2020.
    2. MO suggested Transport is important noting the changes that are taking place resulting from the new development and a presentation to the community is the better medium for communication to the public in the Gilston Area.

## Healthy Town Framework

* + 1. KS advised that the Healthy Town Framework is also expected to go to consultation at the same time as the Transport strategy in January 2020. KS asked for the views from the community reps on the best engagement for the residents in the area.
    2. LH pointed out that most of the information outlined in the Healthy Town Framework is fundamental to the Garden Town.

## Stewardship

* + 1. KS advised out that feedback is awaited from ARUP who are commissioned to undertake Stewardship work for the Garden Town. ARUP is to provide a stewardship model assessment for recommendation on what will work best in the Garden town taking into consideration the characteristics of each of the development allocations including the Gilston Area. More engagement is proposed with landowners and stakeholders in the early part of 2020.
    2. LH and MO suggested there is need to consider different facilitation techniques to provide useful discussion, better feedback and outcomes in future workshops.
    3. MO considered that the time allocation for discussion was too short last time and the representatives at the tables should have been more mixed.
    4. MO enquired on how does the Stewardship Framework fits in with the Neighbourhood Plan.
    5. KS pointed out that the Stewardship Framework would include broad principles and a strategic framework that allows engagement on detailed conversations.
    6. PM pointed out that the HGGT work should not delay the works at Gilston.
    7. KS informed that the HGGT ARUP document is being targeted at the March Garden Town board meeting.
    8. LH recommended a special meeting of the steering group to look at the ARUP recommendations in the context of the proposed Governance Strategy from Places for People (PfP) and the approach from Briggens Estate.

## Economy Commission

* + 1. LH emphasised the importance of the employment plan and delivering the economic growth set out in the District Plan.

## Sustainable Development & Quality Design

* + 1. KS advised that the sustainability checklist document which includes water supply. The document is expected to be a guidance document for developments to achieve sustainable development and the checklist list will guide the process. Timescales to be confirmed.
    2. KS reported that a bid has been submitted for Gov’t funding to keep the HGGT capacity of the Garden Town team and feedback for the HIF and bid are being awaited.

# Gilston Area Update

## Briggens Estate (Village 7) application & Public Exhibitions

* + 1. MO enquired on how the Briggens Estate will fund the Neighbourhood Group Plan.

## Gilston Park Estate (Villages 1-6) and River Crossings

* + 1. PM informed on potential areas for further consultation namely employment, Gypsy & travellers’ potential site, movement strategy, potential new access for V1 around the existing Eastwick junction.

## Gilston Area Charter

* + 1. KP informed that the views of the QRP are being taken on board giving rise to a few actions that will help inform the Charter direction and noting that the Gilston Area Charter is not just a document that you can apply to any masterplan or any other growth area.

# Other District, County and Neighbourhood Planning Updates

## Hunsdon, Eastwick & Gilston Neighbourhood Plan Update

* + 1. MO informed that the process is being finalised having reviewed the consultation responses and completion date is expected by mid to end of January 2020.

## Hunsdon Neighbourhood Plan update

* + 1. BT indicated that the draft policies are being looked at by consultants and the timeline to be confirmed.

# Other updates from Promoter/Developer Updates

7.1 BT raised the issue of the A414 strategy the requirement for driving on the dual carriage through the middle of Gilston and enquired on when engagement will commence.

7.2 AH reported that Hertfordshire County Council (HCC) and Essex County Council (ECC) are undertaking detailed review of the assessment which is taking longer than anticipated and the final report is expected around the middle to end of January 2020.

7.3 PM raised the issue on the Garden Town works and the opportunity to engage with the Garden Town work streams.

**Action:** LH to raise the issue of Developers engagement with the GT at the next GT Board meeting.

# Review of the Steering Group List of Matters

8.1 AH suggested that the Steering Group List of matters be circulated by email January 2020 and raised for discussion at the next Steering Group Meeting in the New Year.

# Steering Group Programme

9.1 AH asked for the Steering Group Programme to be circulated in January 2020 for discussion at the next Steering Group Meeting.

**Action:** AH requested that HGGT Programme of works be shared at next Steering Group meeting.

# Any Other Business

10.1 RC informed of the rebranded website of the Harlow and Gilston Garden Town website which had a soft launch 13th December 2019.

**Action:** AH to share the link Harlow and Gilston Garden Town website link with Steering Group members.

The meeting closed at 6.30pm.

Date of next meeting: Thursday 20th February 2020 at 16.00pm (East Herts Council Offices)