



Part 2

East Herts District Plan

**Examination Hearing
Statements**

Matters and Issues: Part 2

Chapter 11: The Gilston Area

Matter and Issues, Part 2: Chapter 11 – The Gilston Area

Issues:

Question 1

The Gilston Area is a very large allocation with the potential to eventually provide some 10,000 new homes. What considerations led to its allocation? How and where did the loss of Green Belt and countryside fit into those considerations?

1. The Supporting Document (**SSS/001**) identifies how the area to the north of Harlow was identified as a sustainable location to meet a proportion of the District's housing needs. This detailed assessment included consideration of a large range of criteria, including potential impacts on Green Belt and the countryside. As such, this area was identified as a 'Broad Location for Growth' within the Preferred Options District Plan for the delivery of between 3,000 and 10,000 homes.
2. Following the Preferred Options, further work was undertaken that led to the inclusion of the site as a proposed allocation within the Pre-Submission version of the District Plan. This work, which is documented within the Gilston Area Settlement Appraisal (**SSS/008**), included an assessment of viability and infrastructure issues as well as consideration of site boundaries and amended Green Belt boundaries. The consideration of boundaries was partly informed by the Harlow Strategic Sites Assessment (**HOP/003**).
3. Prior to the Pre-Submission consultation, the Green Belt Review (**GRB/001**) was undertaken which assessed various parcels of land across the District. This study concluded that, similar to many other areas within the District, the Green Belt to the north of Harlow was of very low suitability for future development. This is to be expected where land is meeting the functions of Green Belt as identified within the NPPF. However, in balancing a range of considerations, it is the view of the Council that the need to provide for development in sustainable locations is of fundamental importance. It is this reasoning that has shaped the development strategy for the District. The Council has identified what it believes to be the necessary exceptional circumstances for the release of Green Belt across the District within the Green Belt Topic Paper (**TPA/003**).
4. The revised Green Belt boundaries for the Gilston Area have been considered in accordance with the Council's aim to only release as much Green Belt as necessary to delivery housing in sustainable locations. The amended boundary follows recognisable physical features such as roads, treelines/hedgerows and watercourses wherever it is feasible to do so. These boundaries can also be

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strengthened through careful design and landscaping. The Council recognises that the amended boundary leaves a relatively narrow strip of Green Belt between the built form of Harlow and the Gilston Area. However, when looking at the Metropolitan Green belt as a whole, this is not an unusual occurrence. Crucially, it is the view of the Council that the remaining Green Belt will still perform an important function when considered in light of the five purposes contained within the NPPF. In particular, it will continue to prevent Harlow from encroaching further on the Stort Valley. The Gilston Area also includes land that currently forms part of the Rural Area Beyond the Green Belt. This is to ensure that the overall site area is able to accommodate the proposed number of homes, as well as the supporting infrastructure that is required in order to provide a development that is consistent with the sustainability principles upon which the District Plan is based.

5. The amended Green Belt boundaries will mean that critical highway infrastructure (the widened Central Stort Crossing and new Second Stort Crossing) will need to be provided within the Green Belt. However, the Council considers that these schemes would not represent inappropriate development within the Green Belt, as directed by Paragraph 90 of the NPPF. If it is considered that Paragraph 90 wouldn't apply, then it is the view of the Council that the need to deliver this critical piece of infrastructure would represent 'very special circumstances' in accordance with Paragraph 88 of the NPPF.
6. The Council chose to support 10,000 homes in this location on the basis that the significant critical mass of development would ensure that the amount of infrastructure to be provided both on-site and off-site could be maximised. In addition, development of the Gilston Area will provide a significant amount of housing to help meet identified needs beyond 2033. This will assist in ensuring that Green Belt boundaries do not need to be reviewed again at the end of the Plan period, as required by Paragraph 85 of the NPPF.

Question 2

How was loss of the Green Belt and countryside taken into account in its designation as a Garden Town?

1. As noted in the response to Question 1, the loss of Green Belt and countryside was considered as part of the detailed site assessment work that has informed the District Plan. The Council, working jointly with Harlow and Epping Forest Councils, submitted a bid for the Harlow and Gilston Garden Town in October 2016, shortly before the Pre-Submission consultation on the District Plan. The Gilston Area was therefore already identified as a proposed allocation prior to the submission of the Garden Town bid. Harlow and Epping Forest Councils are

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progressing their own local plans which include consideration of loss of Green Belt and countryside. These issues have therefore been considered through the respective local plans and have not been duplicated as part of the Garden Town project. However the Garden Town project is based on the need to provide for new development in sustainable locations, and is therefore consistent with the policy requirements of the NPPF.

Question 3

What progress has been made on the funding and delivery of necessary infrastructure?

Inspector's Notes:

b. As part of the Council's statement, can I have a list of critical transport infrastructure for the Gilston Area, its likely progress, means of funding and possible risks to delivery.

1. A range of infrastructure schemes will be required to support development in this location. Of particular importance are the critical highways infrastructure projects that will be required to deliver growth across the wider Harlow area. These schemes are contained within the Highways and Transportation Infrastructure MoU signed by the Housing Market Area authorities (Appendix B to **SOC/001**), as well as the Infrastructure Delivery Plan (**IDM/001**). Of direct importance to the Gilston Area are:
 - a widened Central Stort Crossing between Eastwick Roundabout and Burnt Mill Roundabout (incorporating a sustainable transport corridor running from the Gilston Area to Harlow town centre); and
 - a new Second Stort Crossing between Eastwick Road in East Herts and River Way in Harlow.
2. These schemes are considered to represent a single package of measures which is the subject of a £150 million bid for funding as part of the Government's Housing Infrastructure Fund. Securing this funding would help to facilitate accelerated delivery of these schemes to the earliest stages of development. The funding would also enable the delivery of a more ambitious and aspirational scheme than would otherwise be the case, potentially leading to a great modal shift away from car use. However, it should be noted that, should this bid be unsuccessful, the landowners of the Gilston Area would be expected to fund the

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delivery of the widened Central Stort Crossing and provide significant funding towards the new Second Stort Crossing during the plan period at the stage that they are required in highway terms. These cost assumptions were included in the financial viability work for the Gilston Area that forms part of the District Plan evidence base (**IDM/002**).

3. The route of the proposed Second Stort Crossing lies outside of the site boundary of the Gilston Area, and is therefore not within the control of the Gilston Area landowners. There is currently no agreement in place with the owners of the land between Eastwick Road and the River Stort to facilitate the delivery of the Second Crossing. Following the conclusion of the Examination process, the Council will seek to engage with the landowners to reach agreement. However, should it not be possible to reach an agreement the Council will seek to proceed with a Compulsory Purchase Order. The principle of doing so was agreed at a meeting of East Herts Council on 18th October 2017. The Committee report forms Appendix A to this Statement.
4. Other off-site infrastructure schemes need to be considered as a sub-regional issue in light of other growth in the wider area. The Highways and Transportation Infrastructure MoU also identifies a requirement to deliver upgrades to Junctions 7 and 8 of the M11, as well as a new Junction 7a. The new junction (and widening of Gilden Way in Harlow) now has planning permission and is funded. Delivery is expected by 2021. Further work is required in order to investigate the potential to implement interim capacity improvements at Junction 7 which would provide 5 to 10 years of future capacity. Road Investment Strategy 2 or 3 funding could then be used to deliver a more comprehensive scheme later in the Plan period.
5. In relation to Junction 8, the Government has recently announced that Essex County Council has secured £4.09 million from the National Productivity Investment Fund towards the delivery of an interim solution. This will provide extra capacity through the construction of additional lanes. This announcement, in addition to funding already secured through the Greater Peterborough/Greater Cambs and South East LEP's as well as Manchester Airport Group, means that the necessary works are now fully funded. Essex County Council is leading, with partner authorities, the progression of options for a longer term solution and this will support its promotion through the Road Investment Strategy 2/3 for funding.
6. Aside from highways infrastructure, other 'sub-regional' issues include:
 - Princess Alexandra Hospital (PAH) in Harlow; and
 - Rye Meads Sewage Treatment Works (STW).

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7. With regards PAH, a Strategic Outline Case has been submitted by the Hospital Trust in relation to securing funding for the potential re-location of the hospital to a new site on the edge of the town. This submission, which forms the first stage of the process, is likely to be considered by the Government in the near future.
8. In relation to Rye Meads STW, Thames Water submitted a Position Statement in June 2017 (**ED108**). This document confirms that, from a final effluent perspective, the STW has capacity up to 2036. However, upgrades in in sludge and storm streams may be required prior to that.
9. A range of on-site infrastructure schemes will also be required as part of the Gilston Area development including schools and health centres. Again, these are identified within the Infrastructure Delivery Plan (**IDM/001**). The delivery and phasing of these schemes will be secured through the masterplanning and planning application process in due course. The schemes will be fully funded by the landowners/developers, and as such, the risks to delivery are considered to be minimal.

Question 4

Apart from infrastructure what other risks are there to delivery?

1. The Gilston Area site is within the ownership of two willing landowners. The need for a process of land assembly therefore does not exist. The Council does not consider that there are any other risks to delivery.

Question 5

Monitoring the progress of such a large site and setting out actions to be taken should progress be delayed will be critical to the contribution the allocated site makes to the provision of housing. Therefore, what mechanisms have been put in place to manage progress? What are the trigger points where action will be taken if set milestones are not met? These should be included in the Plan to assist monitoring.

1. The issue of monitoring has been addressed in response to Matters and Issues Part 2, Detailed Policies (Question 27).

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2. Given the size and complexity of the Gilston Area development, and the fact that it is expected to make a significant contribution towards housing needs within the Plan period, the Council is of the view that it would be appropriate to include a specific policy within the District Plan to monitor its delivery. The following supporting text and policy is therefore proposed for Chapter 25 Delivery and Monitoring.

25.4.2 Given the size and complexity of the Gilston Area development, and the fact that it is expected to make a significant contribution towards housing needs within the Plan period, it is considered important to closely monitor its implementation on an annual basis in accordance with Policy DEL4.

Policy DEL4 Monitoring of the Gilston Area

- I. In order to ensure timely delivery of the Gilston Area, the Council will draw up an action plan setting out key milestones for the delivery the site, including masterplanning, phasing of infrastructure and submission of planning applications, and monitor its progress on an annual basis.
- II. The annual rate of housing completions at the Gilston Area will be considered as part of District wide monitoring, in accordance with the provisions of Policy DEL3.

Question 6

There are comprehensive documents setting out development aims for the area as a Garden Town, including the Concept Framework. What is the status of this document?

1. The Concept Framework document was jointly agreed in draft form prior to the Pre-Submission consultation of the District Plan in November 2016. The purpose of the document is to:
 - Add further detail to the supporting text and policies contained within Chapter 11 of the District Plan;
 - To summarise the work undertaken to date by the landowners and the Council;
 - To identify a vision for the site and provide a framework for delivery that will inform the Examination process and future masterplanning.

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2. Policy GA1 of the Pre-Submission District Plan committed the Council to working collaboratively with the landowners and local communities in order to finalise the document. A number of stakeholder workshops have taken place over the last few months in order to discuss different aspects of the proposed development with. A Steering Group, comprising Council officers, the landowners and community representatives has also been established in order to provide a forum for discussion on the proposals for the Gilston Area, including the Concept Framework. In addition, a specific period of public consultation was undertaken on the draft document in summer 2017. The Council and the landowners will use the feedback received during the workshops and the consultation to finalise the document following the Examination Hearings, working with community representatives and service providers as appropriate.
3. At present, the Concept Framework is a technical document that forms part of the evidence base for the District Plan. Once completed, the Council will give consideration as to whether or not it might be appropriate to adopt it as a Supplementary Planning Document.

Question 7

Page 23 of the Position statement sets out a work programme – has this been adhered to, when will delivery commence?

1. The work programme on Page 23 of the Harlow and Gilston Garden Town Expression of Interest (Appendix B to the Harlow and Gilston Garden Town updated Position Statement – **ED123**), identified the aspiration for all four local authorities to publish respective Regulation 19 Pre-Submission local plans by autumn 2016.
2. East Herts Council met that timescale by publishing the Pre-Submission District Plan in November 2016. Epping Forest and Harlow Councils are expected to publish their plans by the end of 2017, while Uttlesford Council anticipates doing the same in the New Year. While the preparation of the three neighbouring local plans has been delayed, this has not impacted negatively on timescales associated with the Garden Town work. In addition, the delays will not impact on the delivery timescales for the Gilston Area.