

Chapter 12

The Gilston Area

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12.1 Introduction

- 12.1.1** As this area will continue to be physically separated from Harlow and development in this locate would contribute to East Herts' development needs, it is considered appropriate to refer to this Broad Location as the Gilston Area.
- 12.1.2** The area is located across the Stort Valley approximately 500 metres from the edge of Harlow at the nearest point, close to Harlow Town railway station and the employment areas and town centre of Harlow. It is characterised by an area of undulating countryside with a number of features including small streams, woods, hedgerows, and at the centre the landscaped bowl of Gilston Park. Harlow is one of the early New Towns and has regeneration needs which Harlow District Council is seeking to address through a strategy based on increased critical mass to draw investment to the town and enhance its economic performance. Strategic scale development will enable a comprehensive approach to the planning of infrastructure and the building of sustainable communities.
- 12.1.3** The main components of the development strategy for the Gilston Area are as follows:
- 12.1.4** **Housing:** land in the Gilston Area is required for development in order to address unmet housing needs from villages in the centre and east of the East Herts area, as well as from Bishop's Stortford; to provide flexibility to the housing strategy for East Herts and guard against under-delivery elsewhere in the District; and to help avoid future incremental housing development to the settlements elsewhere in East Herts. Strategic-scale development will provide for a wide range of housing types and tenures, including extensive provision for families and older people.
- 12.1.5** **Education:** strategic scale development in the Gilston Area could support one or more new secondary schools and a number of primary schools, as well as provision for pre school and post 16 education needs.
- 12.1.6** **Transport:** a wide range of small and large scale interventions including sustainable transport measures and highways, will be required if development is able to proceed without causing unacceptable congestion in Harlow and the surrounding towns and villages, as well as the wider strategic transport network. These interventions will be developed and tested through the preparation of a Development Plan Document (see below).
- 12.1.7** **Other Infrastructure:** a wide range of supporting infrastructure will be required. It is likely that a new trunk sewer connecting with Rye Meads will be provided to serve development east of Harlow, and it is likely to be feasible to connect development north of the Stort into this sewer. However, the landowner/developers are proposing a new sewage treatment works to serve development in the Gilston Area so that the Broad Location is not reliant on provision of the new trunk sewer.

- 12.1.8 Employment and Retail:** a strategic business park would not be appropriate in this location because it could undermine the Enterprise Zone within Harlow, and is too far from the M11 to be attractive. However, development in this location could contribute to the regeneration of Harlow, by attracting skilled workers who may choose to seek work locally over time. A smaller-scale employment area(s) may be designated, provided that it complements the regeneration activities in Harlow, and additional employment in and around neighbourhood centres is likely to be provided.
- 12.1.9 Character:** to ensure a strong character for the area, new development will need to treat the Stort as a central piece of strategic Green Infrastructure, avoiding development on the valley sides south of Gilston. There will be a strong internal transport network and enhanced role for Harlow Town station. Design principles should be unified as far as possible with elements of design taken from the market towns and villages in East Herts.

12.2 Development in the Gilston Area

12.2.1 The main features of the policy approach to development in the Gilston Area are shown on Figure 12.1 below:

Figure 12.1 Key Diagram for Land in the Gilston Area



12.2.2 Given the complexity of the transport issues in particular, a subsequent Development Plan Document will be necessary to refine the proposals and assess their feasibility as well as the strategy and supporting infrastructure for the area.

12.2.3 The feasibility of a strategic-scale development of between 5,000 and 10,000 new homes in the Gilston Area will be tested through the preparation of the DPD. 5,000 homes represents the minimum scale of development considered necessary to deliver on-site and off-site supporting infrastructure, and deliver the range of sustainability features which would be expected given the width of the Stort Valley and resultant requirement for a degree of self-containment. Subject to testing through

masterplanning, assessing viability and infrastructure planning, 10,000 homes is considered to be the approximate maximum scale of development which could be satisfactorily accommodated in light of environmental and natural assets such as woodlands, the need to avoid coalescence with local settlements, other on-site constraints and transport impacts.

- 12.2.4** It is anticipated that development could commence on site towards the beginning of the 2021-26 period, continuing through the remainder of the plan period and beyond. Hence it is estimated that only 3,000 of the overall headline housing anticipated may be complete by 2031, with the site continuing to supply a pipeline of future housing to address local need going forward from 2031 onwards.
- 12.2.5** Given uncertainties surrounding the identification of satisfactory viable solutions to the issues identified above and elsewhere in this section of the plan, the District Council will draw up plans in parallel with the other Broad Locations for Development, in the event that further testing demonstrates that strategic-scale development is either not feasible, or if there are infrastructure constraints limiting the site's acceptable capacity.
- 12.2.6** Technical work to support the Development Plan Document shall be expected to be part-funded by the landowners/promoters for and with direct involvement of East Herts Council as the Local Planning Authority, Harlow District Council, Sawbridgeworth Town Council, Hunsdon, Gilston, Eastwick, High Wych, and Widford Parish Councils, Essex County Council, Hertfordshire County Council, and other stakeholders as necessary.

GA1 Land in the Gilston Area

I. To meet long-term needs, land in the Gilston Area is identified as a Broad Location for Development.

II. East Herts Council will test through a Development Plan Document (DPD) the feasibility of land in the Gilston Area to accommodate between 5,000 and 10,000 new homes (overall looking beyond this plan period) and supporting uses and infrastructure in accordance with Policy DPS4 (Broad Locations for Development). Development shall not proceed in the Gilston Area until the adoption of the DPD.

III. The DPD shall be prepared by the Council working with key stakeholders including Harlow Council, Sawbridgeworth Town Council, Hunsdon, Gilston, Eastwick, High Wych, and Widford Parish Councils, Essex County Council, Hertfordshire County Council, landowners/developers, and other stakeholders as necessary.

IV. Depending on the scale and form of development opportunities that are identified, in addition to the requirements of Policy DPS4 (Broad Locations for Development), the Development Plan Document and site wide masterplan is expected to address the following provisions and issues:

- (a) the quantum and distribution of development within this location;
- (b) key design and layout principles to guide subsequent site specific design codes in order to ensure high quality design;
- (c) a range of dwelling type and mix, in accordance with the full provisions of Policy HOU1 (Type and Mix of Housing);
- (d) Affordable Housing in accordance with Policy HOU3 (Affordable Housing)
- (e) quality local green infrastructure through the site including opportunities for preserving and enhancing on-site assets, maximising opportunities to link into existing assets, and enhancing biodiversity;
- (f) necessary new utilities infrastructure, such as a new sewage treatment works and/or a connection into the new trunk sewer;
- (g) a decentralised or District Heating system, or other low carbon heating system for residential and commercial use throughout the development, using locally sourced fuel and with appropriate long-term management arrangements;
- (h) sustainable drainage and provision for flood mitigation;
- (i) social infrastructure including: primary school/s to serve the development and appropriate surrounding catchment area/s; a secondary school to serve the development and the wider School Planning Area; health services and facilities; community facilities; public amenity green space and play areas;
- (j) access arrangements and wider strategic and local highways mitigation measures, including a range of necessary measures in both Hertfordshire and Essex;
- (k) sustainable transport measures including the encouragement of walking and cycling, enhanced passenger transport, providing linkages with Harlow Town Station and travel planning;
- (l) appropriate levels of local retail and employment opportunities to promote self containment and sustainability, including provision for home-working;
- (m) the relationship between the Broad Location and the settlements of Eastwick, Gilston, High Wych and Hunsdon;
- (n) encouraging successful and active communities, including innovative approaches to create the conditions for local resident participation, governance and stewardship of their new communities;
- (o) Green Belt boundaries;
- (p) financial viability and the delivery of all necessary infrastructure;

(q) planning obligations including on and off-site developer contributions; and

(r) other policy provisions of the District Plan and relevant matters, as appropriate.

V. Land in the Gilston Area will remain within the Green Belt until such time as it may be brought forward for development through the adoption of the Development Plan Document by East Herts Council.

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