



- A. Strategic Context
- B. Local Context
- C. Planning Policy Context

Context

2

Provides the local and strategic context to the Gilston Area, including a summary of the relevant planning policy framework

SITE CONTEXT

A. Strategic Context

The Gilston Area lies in the middle of one of the most important economic sub-regions in the UK. Just north of Harlow and south of Cambridge, with direct road and rail links running between London, Stansted and Cambridge, the Gilston Area is within a strategically important corridor of the UK. It is almost halfway between one of the great global cities and one of the best universities in the world, and close to one of Europe’s fastest growing airports.

The M11 sub-region is one of the most economically productive and fastest growing areas of the UK. New jobs in this area generate more Gross Value Added (“GVA”) than anywhere else in the country. The sub-region is home to world-leading clusters in education, life sciences, health, pharmaceuticals and technology – meaning it is home to the country’s highest skilled workers.

Alongside its major strengths and opportunities, the sub region faces constraints. Due to its economic success, people want to live and work here – and businesses want to locate within it. Housebuilding has not kept up with population growth, and house prices are climbing – well in excess of wage growth with high and rising costs of housing and workers. A public-private partnership – The London Stansted Cambridge Corridor Growth Commission - has been set up to provide independent analysis, set out strategies for change and advice to raise the global economic potential of the sub-region.

The Growth Commission published its formal recommendations in July 2016. They have set out the key strengths of the sub-region as well as the threats and risks to its continued and sustainable success. Specifically, the Commission has identified five major risks and five priorities for intervention:

Risks

- Failure to provide quality locations to live and work
- Labour market shortages, which will reduce business investment
- Increased housing pressures that could reduce skills supply
- Continued polarisation of the workforce and communities, increasing inequality
- Growth in London exerting greater challenges and pressures on localities within the Corridor

Opportunities

- New powers and investment vehicles for infrastructure, housing and placemaking
- Place-making for tech and life sciences (improving the space offer and creating suitable supporting communities)
- Building talent and ensuring everyone can benefit (skills investment)
- Investing in Stansted Airport as a source of growth
- Working more closely with London would help to develop new and more effective responses to shared challenges and opportunities across all major areas of shared policy, including transport, infrastructure, health, business competitiveness, international connectivity, housing, education and skills.

The Gilston Area can make a strategic contribution to addressing these challenges and priorities through commitment to deliver homes and through investment in skills, communities and exemplary placemaking.

For the sub-region to realise its economic growth potential, the working age population must grow at a faster rate than is currently predicted. Thousands of new homes and associated infrastructure are required to offer younger workers and their families attractive places to live. Without major investment in new homes, skilled working age people will continue to be priced out of the regional housing market



Eastwick



Aldbury



Harlow Town Centre



Hunsdon



Bishop's Stortford



St Albans



Temple Fields

B. Local Context

The Gilston Area is just to the north of Harlow, separated from the town by the River Stort Valley and the A414 dual carriageway. The village of Hunsdon is situated to the west, Widford to the north and High Wych to the east, beyond which is Sawbridgeworth. The site lies around, but does not include, the settlements of Eastwick and Gilston.

The Gilston Area development is within East Herts, with access corridors linking over the boundary into Harlow. The Gilston Area will have strong ties to Harlow – with the town providing many of the large scale retail shops, services and leisure facilities for the new community that are not provided at a neighbourhood level on-site. This includes the hospital, theatre and shopping centre. There is an acknowledged need for regeneration in Harlow. New residents and homes in the area will boost local spending, support growth and vitality of the town centre, and improve the attractiveness of Harlow to investors.

The Gilston Area extends to approximately 1,120 hectares. Much of the site consists of countryside, primarily in agricultural use, interspersed with areas of woodland.

This agricultural land largely comprises of arable fields. The main blocks of woodland are situated in the northern and the northeastern parts of the site and effectively form its boundaries in these locations. The northwestern part of the area comprises of Hunsdon Airfield - a former RAF base - which has a number of grass runways that are used for micro-light flights.

The topography of the site is informed by three tributaries of the River Stort, which run from north to south before flowing into the Stort - Fiddlers Brook, Pole Hole Brook and Eastwick Brook. A 400kV overhead power line enters the north-east corner of the site and runs south-west to the north-west of Eastwick village, continuing over Hunsdon Brook.

The site as a whole is interspersed with a handful of farmsteads, dwellings and other buildings, and is crossed by a number of public footpaths and some minor roads.

A thorough review of the site context is set out in Chapter 3.

- Gilston Park
- Woodland
- Ancient Woodland
- Woodland Glade
- Plateau
- Eastwick Valley
- Hunsdon Airfield
- Floodplain
- Rivers
- Settlements
- Site Boundary



Gilston Area - Landscape Character Zones



Introduction

Context

Vision & Objectives

Baseline Summary

Spatial Framework

Delivery & Implementation

Next Steps

C. Planning Policy Context

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

Core Principles

The NPPF was published on 27 March 2012 and sets out the Government’s planning policies and how these are to be applied. The NPPF is underpinned by a presumption in favour of sustainable development, which should be “seen as a golden thread running through both plan-making and decision-taking”. Local planning authorities are required to positively seek opportunities to meet the development needs of their local area and Local Plans are to meet objectively assessed needs.

Paragraph 17 of the NPPF identifies twelve core planning principles. Those that have been particularly influential in terms of progressing this Concept Framework are as follows:

- Recognition that the planning system should be planned and should be based on a joint working and cooperation to address larger than local issues;
- Proactively drive and support sustainable economic development to deliver homes, business and industrial units, infrastructure and thriving local places that the Country needs;
- Securing high quality design and good standard of amenity, and take account of the different roles and character of different areas;
- Promote mix use development and encourage multiple benefits from the use of land in urban and rural areas recognising that some open land can perform many functions; and
- Actively manage patterns of growth to make the fullest possible use of public transport, walking, and cycling, and focus significant development in locations which are or can be made sustainable.

Boosting Housing Supply

The Government is committed to the delivery of housing and economic growth. Paragraph 47 requires local planning authorities to “boost significantly the supply of housing”, and provide a wide mix of homes to suit the full, objectively assessed needs for market and affordable housing in the housing market area.

The planning system is required to “deliver a wide choice of high quality homes, widen opportunities for home ownership and create sustainable, inclusive and mixed communities” (paragraph 50).

Local Plans Positively Prepared

The NPPF confirms at paragraph 150 that Local Plans are key to delivering sustainable development that reflects the vision and aspirations of local communities. Local Plans should be aspirational but realistic (paragraph 154) and importantly, they should:

- Plan positively for development and infrastructure required in the area to meet identified objectives and key principles;
- Indicate broad locations for strategic development on a key diagram and land use designations on a proposals map;
- Allocate sites to promote development and flexible use of land and provide detail on form, scale, access and quantum of development where appropriate;
- Identify land where development would be appropriate for instance because of its environmental or historic significance; and
- Contain a clear strategy for enhancing the natural build and historic environment.

The NPPF contains principles for the Green Belt. Paragraph 85 requires LPA’s to satisfy themselves that Green Belt boundaries will not need to be altered at the end of the development plan period.

National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG)

The Government launched the NPPG which provides supporting guidance to the NPPF, and has replaced previous supporting national guidance.

The importance of good design is emphasised within the NPPG, which states that “achieving good design is about creating places, buildings, or spaces that work well for everyone, look good, last well, and will adapt to the needs of future generations” (Design - paragraph 001).

The NPPG guides local planning authorities to resolve and secure the necessary cooperation prior to the submission of their Local Plans for examination. The duty to cooperate seeks to ensure that local planning authorities address social, environmental and economic issues by collaboratively working with other local planning authorities beyond their own administrative boundaries.

The Government’s adopted policy guidelines set out in the NPPF/ PPG together with the draft Housing and Planning Bill (October 2015), the Autumn Spending Review Statement (November 2015), the NPPF consultation (December 2015) and the former Prime Minister’s Statement (January 2016) all indicate a top priority towards housing growth in bringing forward thousands of homes across the country to meet critical housing shortfalls and needs within boroughs.

East Herts Local Plan

The East Herts Local Plan Second Review was adopted in 2007, and continues to form part of the statutory development plan. The Proposals Map identifies the following designations within the Gilston Area:

- Green Belt – the southern portion falls within this designation;
- Rural Area beyond the Green Belt – this relates to the northern portion of the site;
- Area of Archaeological Significance – various locations across the site;
- Wildlife Sites - various locations across the site; and
- Scheduled Monuments - various locations across the site.

The Local Plan set out the development strategy to 2011 and as a result a replacement District Plan is currently in the process of being prepared.

East Herts District Plan

The Pre-Submission version of the District Plan, which sets out the development strategy for East Herts up to 2033, will be published for a period of public consultation in November 2016. The Plan contains a number of Strategic Objectives which have underpinned the rationale behind the Concept Framework. In particular,

- Objective 2: To encourage safe and vibrant mixed communities that provide for the needs of all East Herts residents including young, old, disabled and disadvantaged.
- Objective 3: To balance the housing market by delivering a mix of market, low cost, and affordable homes and accommodating the housing needs of an ageing population.
- Objective 9: To ensure that development occurs in parallel with provision of the necessary infrastructure, including enhancement and provision of green infrastructure.

Draft Policy DPS1 identifies that the level of housing need in the District is for 16,390 new homes by 2033. In addition, there is a need to provide for a minimum of 435 to 505 new jobs each year. The development strategy contained within the District Plan has been informed by a series of ‘Guiding Principles’, a number of which are relevant to this Concept Framework:

- Guiding Principle 3: To promote self-containment by directing development to areas where there is reasonable proximity to services and facilities, and which reflect existing travel to work areas, school catchments, and retail spend patterns and functional geographies;
- Guiding Principle 4: Wherever possible to utilise readily available features to provide clear and unambiguous Green Belt boundaries;
- Guiding Principle 5: To co-operate with adjoining authorities on cross-boundary strategic matters where it is reasonable to do so;
- Guiding Principle 7: To acknowledge that the capacity for the market towns and villages to grow is constrained, and therefore large-scale strategic development will be required;

The Plan identifies the Gilston Area as an allocation to deliver 10,000 new homes, within this Plan period and beyond, along with supporting infrastructure such as new roads, schools, health centres and green space.

This Concept Framework seeks to support the allocation of the site by providing additional information with regards to various issues including design and layout principles, proposed land uses, and key infrastructure requirements.