

Chapter 11

The Gilston Area

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11.1 Introduction

- 11.1.1** The Gilston Area is located to the north of the Stort Valley, in close proximity to the New Town of Harlow. It is characterised by an area of undulating countryside with a number of features including small streams, woods, hedgerows, and the historically important Gilston Park. A number of small settlements are located adjacent to the Gilston Area, including the villages of Hunsdon, Eastwick and Gilston.
- 11.1.2** Development in this location provides a unique opportunity to deliver a strategic sized sustainable development that will provide for a significant proportion of the District's housing needs, both within this Plan period and beyond. As such, the Gilston Area is allocated for a total of 10,000 new homes, with approximately 3,000 homes to be delivered in the Plan period, along with a significant amount of supporting infrastructure including roads and sustainable transport provision, schools, health centres and public open space. Providing a significant amount of development beyond 2033 will help to ensure that Green Belt boundaries will not need to be reviewed again in this location, and will also reduce pressure to provide development in and around existing settlements in the next Plan period.
- 11.1.3** Given its proximity to Harlow and its railway stations, residents of the Gilston Area will have access to substantial employment opportunities both within the town itself, and further afield. As well as providing benefits to East Herts, the development will support the regeneration of Harlow by helping to draw investment to the town and enhance its economic performance.
- 11.1.4** A Concept Framework is being prepared jointly by the landowners and the Council, in consultation with local communities, which will identify design principles, land uses, infrastructure requirements and phasing.

11.2 Development in the Gilston Area

- 11.2.1** The main components of the development strategy for the Gilston Area are as follows:
 - 11.2.2 Housing:** development in this location will provide a mixture of house sizes and tenures across seven distinct villages, including affordable housing and homes for older people. Provision will also be made for Gypsy and Travellers and Travelling Showpeople.
 - 11.2.3 Education:** the site will deliver two new secondary schools and five primary schools in order to fully cater for the needs arising from the development. Early Years Education will also be provided for.
 - 11.2.4 Transport:** a wide range of small and large scale interventions including sustainable transport measures, will be required if development in the wider Harlow area, including the Gilston Area, is able to proceed without causing unacceptable
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congestion in Harlow and the surrounding towns and villages, as well as the wider strategic transport network. These interventions include a new Junction 7a on the M11, upgrades to Junctions 7 & 8, a second River Stort crossing, and widening of the existing crossing. Sustainable transport measures will also be required including new bus services, connecting to Harlow and the wider area, as well as provision for walking and cycling.

- 11.2.5 Community Facilities:** the Gilston Area will provide new community facilities based around a network of village centres. The facilities will include community meeting spaces, libraries and sport and recreation facilities. A range of local shops will also be provided, along with two healthcare centres which will accommodate both family doctors and other health services such as dentists, pharmacies, physiotherapy and outpatient services. Consideration will also be given to the potential of the site to facilitate the re-location of the Princess Alexandra Hospital.
- 11.2.6 Employment:** the development will provide local employment, including small scale office space. Residents will also be able to access more substantial employment opportunities within Harlow, including the Enterprise Zone. The proximity of the site to Harlow Town station will also enable sustainable access to employment opportunities further afield, including Cambridge, Bishop's Stortford and London.
- 11.2.7 Open Space:** The site allocation covers a large geographical area. However, only the south and south eastern sections of the site will be developed. In addition to development, this part of the site will deliver new green spaces including sports pitches, parks and recreation areas. Within the north and north western sections of the site, a substantial amount of public open space in the form of managed parklands will be provided. This area will therefore remain undeveloped, with the exception of a small number of buildings associated with its recreational use. A community land trust, or other governance mechanism as appropriate, will be established in order to deliver local ownership and management of these assets. This should take place early in the overall development programme. In addition, the environment of the Stort Valley will be enhanced through the provision of new green infrastructure links.
- 11.2.8 Character:** The development will be of high quality design, with careful consideration given to layout, architecture, building heights and materials. It will also be sensitively integrated visually in the wider context of the surrounding landscape. Landscape buffers will be provided in order to maintain the distinct identities of Eastwick and Gilston villages within the context of the overall development.
- 11.2.9 Heritage:** The site contains a number of heritage assets, including listed buildings and Scheduled Monuments. Gilston Park, a locally important historic asset, is also located within the Gilston Area, although it does not form part of the site allocation. The development will be designed in order to ensure that these assets are retained, and their setting protected within the context of the overall development.

11.2.10 Ecology and Environment: The development will retain and protect important hedgerows, County Wildlife sites and ancient woodlands. New habitats will be created in order to achieve an overall net gain in biodiversity. A Sustainable Drainage (SuD's) network will be integrated to provide additional planting and biodiversity and to facilitate drainage and water retention.

11.2.11 The main features of the policy approach to development in the Gilston Area are shown on Figure 11.1 below:

Figure 11.1 Key Diagram for the Gilston Area












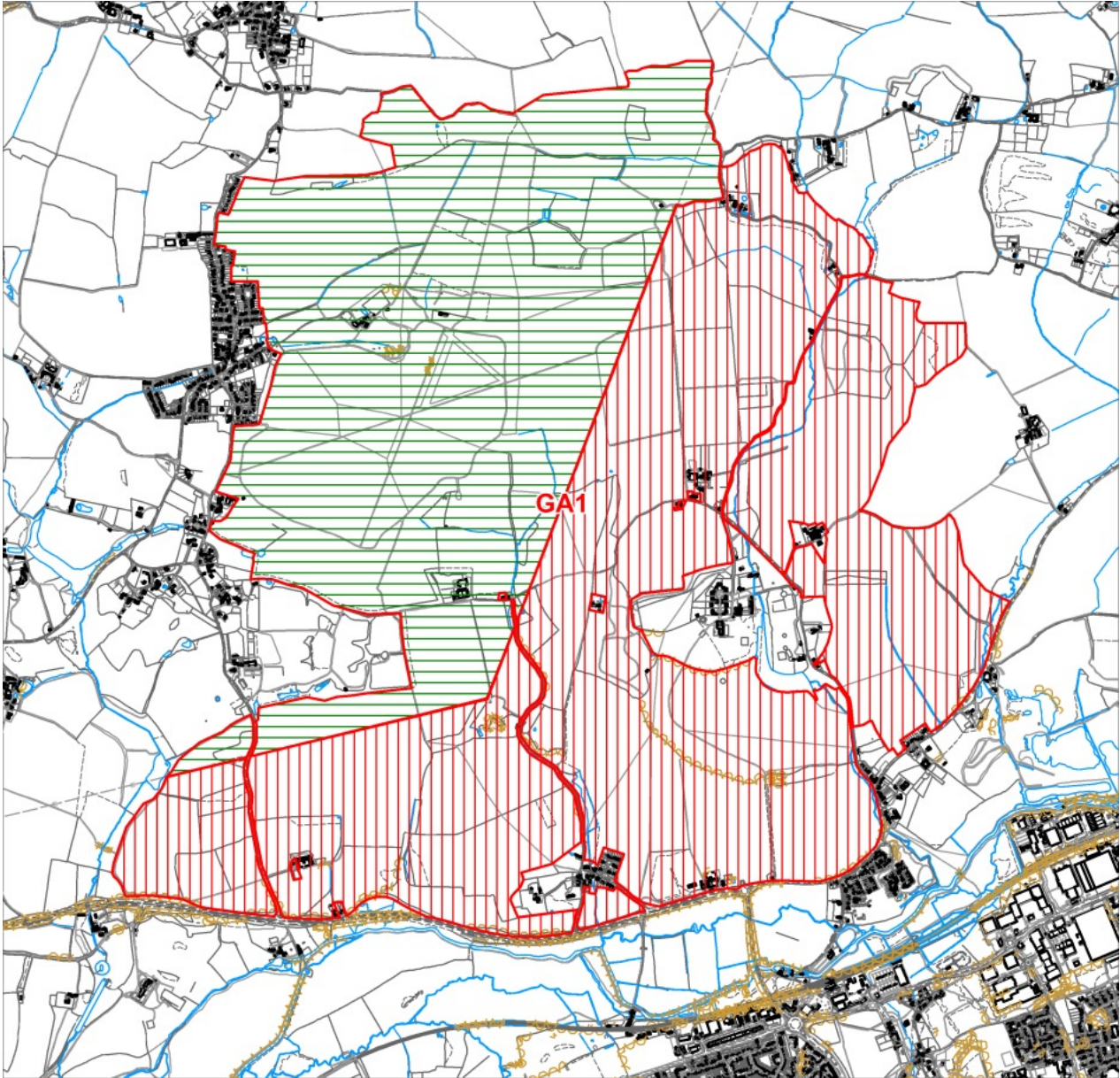
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|---|---|---|----------------------------------|
|  | Site allocation developed area (with a further 6,950 homes beyond 2033) |  | Rural Area Beyond the Green Belt |
|  | New secondary schools |  | Existing built up areas |
|  | New primary schools |  | Green Belt |
|  | New neighbourhood centre |  | Community trust open space land |
|  | District/County boundary |  | Railway station |
| | | EZ | Enterprise Zone |

Figure 11.2 Site Location Plan: The Gilston Area



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Policy GA1 The Gilston Area

I. In accordance with Policy DPS3 (Housing Supply 2011-2033), land at the Gilston Area is allocated for development to accommodate 10,000 homes, to be delivered within this Plan period and beyond. It is anticipated that approximately 3,000 homes could be delivered by 2033.

II. A Concept Framework will be jointly prepared by the landowners and the Council, in consultation with local communities, which will identify design principles, potential land uses, infrastructure requirements and phasing. Prior to the submission of any planning application(s) further detailed design work will be required in order to agree, among other things, the quantum and distribution of land uses, access and layout principles.

III. The development is expected to address the following provisions and issues:

(a) a range of dwelling type and mix, in accordance with the provisions of Policy HOU1 (Type and Mix of Housing);

(b) Affordable Housing in accordance with Policy HOU3 (Affordable Housing);

(c) a care home/ flexi-care or sheltered properties in accordance with the provisions of Policy HOU6 (Homes for Older and Vulnerable People);

(d) Self Build Housing in accordance with Policy HOU8 (Self Build Housing);

(e) provision of a serviced site for Gypsy and Travellers, in accordance with Policy HOU9 (Gypsies and Travellers and Travelling Showpeople) which should deliver 15 pitches for longer term needs beyond the Plan period;

(f) provision of a serviced site for Travelling Showpeople in accordance with Policy HOU9 (Gypsies and Travellers and Travelling Showpeople) which should deliver 8 plots for longer term needs beyond the Plan period; (each of sufficient size to allow for the provision of accommodation and equipment plus storage/maintenance);

(g) quality local green infrastructure throughout the site including opportunities for preserving and enhancing on-site assets, maximising opportunities to link into existing assets and enhancing biodiversity. Including the protection of County Wildlife Sites and other assets of environmental value;

(h) significant managed public open space and parklands, and a limited number of buildings associated with that use, on the northern section of the site as identified in Figure 11.2, the ownership of which will be transferred to a community trust or other mechanism that ensures long term governance;

(i) a variety of public green spaces across the site, including the provision of play areas and opportunities for outdoor health and fitness activities, as well as space for wildlife;

(j) access arrangements and local highways measures and commensurate financial contributions to addressing impacts on the wider strategic highways network, including a new Junction 7a on the M11;

(k) education facilities, including Early Years facilities, 15fe of primary school provision and 14fe of secondary school provision;

(l) sustainable transport measures which encourage walking and cycling including:

- the provision of cycleways and footways that provide links throughout the site and into Harlow;
- enhancement of existing bridleways and footpaths;
- enhanced passenger transport services including the creation of a sustainable transport route through the site which will link into a sustainable transport corridor which links the Gilston Area to possible development to the south of the town, within Epping Forest District, via the town centre;

(m) consideration of the potential of the site to facilitate the delivery of a re-located Princess Alexandra Hospital;

(n) the use of appropriate landscape buffers in order to protect the individual character and integrity of Eastwick and Gilston villages within the context of the development;

(o) protection and enhancement of heritage assets and their settings, both on-site and in the wider area through appropriate mitigation measures;

(p) neighbourhood centres in accessible locations, providing local retail and community uses, including healthcare facilities to meet the day-to-day retail and health needs of new residents;

(q) small scale office space to meet local needs;

(r) indoor and outdoor sports facilities (which may be shared use) to include junior football and mini soccer pitches;

(s) consideration of need for cemetery provision;

(t) landscaping and planting, both within the site and peripheral, which responds to the existing landscape and complements development, as appropriate;

(u) the delivery of all other necessary on-site and appropriate off-site infrastructure;

(v) necessary new utilities, including integrated communications infrastructure to facilitate home working;

(w) satisfactory water supply, including acceptable water pressure for occupants;

(x) sustainable drainage and provision for flood mitigation;

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

IV. In order to ensure that the site is planned and delivered comprehensively, any application for development on part of the site will be assessed against its contribution to the aims of the Concept Framework, and any other more detailed design work, and will not prejudice the implementation of the site as a whole.

11.3 The River Stort Crossings

- 11.3.1** The greater Harlow area is forecast to experience significant housing and employment growth during the plan period. The A414 corridor is already under pressure. Potential improvements are being explored along the wider corridor, and a new junction on the M11 is being promoted by Essex County Council (Junction 7a). In order to provide capacity to meet the wider needs of the existing residents and businesses, and future growth, the connectivity over the River Stort needs to be improved. Schemes have previously been designed for improvements to the existing A414 crossing at Eastwick.
- 11.3.2** Additional crossing options are also being reviewed, both to the east and the west of the existing crossing. New crossings both to the east and west are feasible, but deliver different benefits. The eastern crossing is the option preferred by Essex County Council, largely because of the way in which it enhances access to the Enterprise Zone and links through, potentially, to the proposed new motorway Junction 7a. Any application proposals will need to address environmental factors such as visual impact, ecology and flooding.
- 11.3.3** In accordance with paragraph 90 of the NPPF the Council considers it appropriate for the crossings to be located across Green Belt land. The Council, Harlow Council, Hertfordshire County Council and Essex County Council are exploring the land ownership associated with delivering additional transport capacity and, if necessary, are able to use CPO powers to bring forward works needed to support the growth and regeneration of the area.
- 11.3.4** Widening of the existing River Stort Crossing will help facilitate the provision of a sustainable transport corridor which will connect the Gilston Area with potential new development to the south of Harlow in Epping Forest District, via the town centre.

Policy GA2 The River Stort Crossings

The Council will work with key stakeholders including Hertfordshire County Council, Essex County Council, Harlow Council, Hertfordshire LEP, and others as appropriate, to facilitate the delivery of the following transport improvements to crossings of the River Stort:

- A widening of the existing A414 crossing to enable a dualling of the northbound and southbound carriageways and provision of a new footway/cycleway, which will form part of a north-south sustainable transport corridor through Harlow; and
- A new vehicular, cycle and pedestrian crossing either to the east of the existing crossing (connecting the A414 to the River Way), or to the west of the existing crossing (connecting the A414 to Elizabeth Way).