

East Herts District Plan Examination

Matter 2 – Development Strategy: Housing

Issue 11

Would the supply be sufficient to meet the housing requirement? If not, what other options are there, what would be the implications in terms of the spatial strategy?

Summary

1. The proposed allocations and policies in the District Plan broadly meet the objectively assessed need for housing. If there are concerns about that, the ability of development in the Gilston Area to exceed the assumed 3,000 homes in the plan period provides flexibility. It is able to do so in a way that does not affect the overall spatial strategy which, for this plan period and beyond, sees a significant part of the areas housing need being met in the Gilston Area.

Gilston Area Proposals

2. The Gilston Area site has been identified for 10,000 homes, and EHDC anticipate that 3,000 homes will be delivered over the plan period. Places for People and City & Provincial Properties consider this to be a conservative estimate and are confident that at least this number of homes will be delivered over before the end of the plan period.
3. Places for People & City and Provincial Properties have commissioned a full professional team who have comprehensively analysed the site, undertaken thorough technical assessments and prepared an illustrative concept masterplan to show a potential layout of the development.
4. Pre-application engagement has begun with EHDC and key stakeholders on an outline planning application for the full 10,000 homes, as well as detailed applications for the widening of the existing Central Crossing and the creation of a new Eastern Crossing. The applications are likely to be capable of submission in the near future, albeit that the landowners would not expect the applications to be determined until post the issue of the Inspector's Report (unless progress of the plan was significantly delayed).
5. The progress and resource commitment made to date is considerably more advanced than would typically be required for a Local Plan process and is evidence that the site can come forward in the short term.
6. The draft Gilston Area Policy GA1 does not impose the 3,000 home figure as a cap/limit, which is understandable given the extent of the local housing need, as well as the urgency to secure the economic and social regeneration of Harlow. This approach is also consistent with the NPPF which advises that sustainable development should be approved without delay (para 15) and the Government's clear commitment to accelerating the delivery of housing beyond that achieved historically.

7. Once development has commenced on site, Places for People & City and Provincial Properties are confident that the Gilston Area will be able to make a greater contribution toward housing numbers in the plan period than currently assumed by EHDC. Site specific factors include:
 - a. The current Government agenda is heavily focused on assisting the delivery of housing, and the measures proposed in the Housing and Planning Act seek to stimulate increased levels of activity, specifically accelerated delivery. It is the planning systems role to facilitate the delivery of housing, especially in instances such as the Gilston Area which is locally supported in the District Plan, forms part of a designated Garden Town and has willing developers who own the necessary land to deliver the villages;
 - b. The Gilston Area is located within a housing market area that is evidenced to have had a under supply of market and affordable housing as shown in the latest Annual Monitoring Reports;
 - c. The latest Strategic Housing Market Assessment evidences the significant extent of forecast housing needed in the housing market area;
 - d. The Gilston Area development is made up of 7 individual villages, each with their own distinct character, which when combined with the varied housing tenures, will create a number of different, non-competing, 'sales centres' which will enable development to come forward at various villages simultaneously;
 - e. Within each village it is likely that multiple housebuilders will be operating and offering differentiated products;
 - f. Each village will contain a mix of housing products, and Places for People has the unique ability to provide a wider range of tenures than a "typical" housebuilder led scheme. In particular, the mix across the majority of villages will include:
 - i. Market housing offering a broad range of accommodation at different pricing points from entry level homes through to larger family properties and apartments ranging from first time properties through to downsizing accommodation;
 - ii. Market rental properties comprising apartments, family accommodation and retirement homes which will not compete with the market sale products;
 - iii. Affordable housing, which does not compete with the private sale offer, consisting of a mix of affordable rent, intermediate rent and intermediate sale products; at a range of income bands to suit local needs;
 - iv. Older persons accommodation including housing with care and offering a mix of leasehold ownership, rental and affordable products;
 - v. Custom Build or Self-build); and
 - vi. Key worker accommodation

- g. Each village has been carefully designed to offer different typologies and differing price points;
 - h. Over time the Gilston Area will grow and have the critical mass to have its own distinct market. As the Gilston Area makes this transition it will gain wider appeal and be able to draw buyers from a larger market. In doing so its sales capacity will increase; and
 - i. Infrastructure delivery will shape the pace and direction of development, and Places for People & City and Provincial Properties are committing to fund all on-site critical infrastructure.
- 8. Places for People & City and Provincial Properties intend to act as ‘master developer’ for the site, adopting responsibility for placemaking, site servicing, critical infrastructure and governance. Whilst Places for People & City and Provincial Properties will develop phases of the development themselves, they will also sell serviced land to house builders and other developers, which will accelerate delivery.
- 9. There will be a need to secure rights over the land on which the proposed Central Crossing and the Eastern Crossing will be built. Although applications for this strategic infrastructure will be submitted by Places for People, the need for new capacity is driven by existing demand, anticipated economic growth in the wider area (including the Enterprise Zone) as well as development allocated in the EHDC, Harlow and Epping Forest plans. There is no reason to doubt that the land and rights will be made available but the relevant authorities have committed to the use of CPO powers if necessary.
- 10. In light of the above factors, Places for People & City and Provincial Properties are confident that the Gilston Area development can make a significant contribution toward addressing local housing needs which will exceed 3,000 homes in the plan period.