



Gilston Steering group

Wednesday 25 October 2017 @ 7.00 pm
Wallfields – Council Chamber

MINUTES

Present – Steering Group Members:

Cllr Linda Haysey (LH)	-	EHC
Liz Watts (LW)	-	EHC
Kevin Steptoe (KS)	-	EHC
Chris Butcher (CB)	-	EHC
Mary Parsons (MP)	-	Places for People
Bob Toll (BT)	-	Neighbourhood Plan Group
Mark Orson (MO)	-	Neighbourhood Plan Group
Anthony Bickmore (AB)	-	Neighbourhood Plan Group
Jill Buck (JBU)	-	Widford Parish Council

Present – Other Invitees:

Lauren Costello (LC)	-	EHC
Janine Bryant (JB)	-	Neighbourhood Plan Group
Mike Newman (MN)	-	Neighbourhood Plan Group
Sarah Bagnall (SB)	-	Neighbourhood Plan Group
Martina Juvara (MJ)	-	Urban Silence
Joanna Chambers (JC)	-	Urban Silence

Apologies : Jan Hayes Griffin – Hertfordshire County Council, Rich Cooke – Essex County Council

Minutes

1. LH welcomed everyone to the meeting. The minutes of the previous meeting were agreed. LH noted that the purpose of the meeting was to discuss the Neighbourhood Plan Group's (NPG) response to the consultation on the draft Concept Framework (CF) document (the Interim response forms Appendix A to these minutes, while the full response forms Appendix B. A schedule of comments received by the Council from other organisations and stakeholders forms Appendix C).
2. AB re-iterated that the local community strongly opposes the principle of development in the Gilston Area, but that they had agreed to work with the Council and landowners to help shape the proposals, on the basis that the Inspector may find the District Plan 'sound'. AB thanked MP for the resources that had been provided in procuring Urban Silence to represent the Neighbourhood Plan Group (NPG) through the process. Urban Silence had been



invited to the Steering Group meeting in order to present the collated views of the local community.

3. AB sought clarification that the CF was an East Herts 'owned document' which would be formally adopted by the Council as there was confusion on this point. LH confirmed it was an East Herts 'owned document' which would be formally endorsed by the Council. LH agreed to provide details of the formal approval process.
4. In discussion it was made clear that East Herts had negotiated with the landowners what was felt to be the best outcome for the community and that this was reflected in the document that went to consultation. LH also referred to the extensive support that the ATLAS team (part of the Homes and Communities Agency) had given the Council in working up the proposals. AB also suggested that, to his knowledge, the core concept being proposed, namely 7 villages set within a landscape setting was unique and so needed very careful handling as it was clearly different from the other urban extensions being planned around Harlow as part of the Garden Town. This, in his view, underlined the need to bring to the table high quality and experienced professionals to advise East Herts.
5. MJ provided comprehensive feedback in relation to the community event that had been held on 23rd September, which had informed the NPG's response to the consultation. MJ stated that the community had been very engaged at the event and that it had attracted residents from Gilston, Hunsdon, Terlings Park and other surrounding areas. MJ indicated that the objective was to highlight the issues raised by the community, and to find areas of common ground that could then inform the revised version of the CF, and possibly a statement of common ground which might be submitted to the District Plan Examination.
6. MP welcomed the work done by the NPG and reassured the community representatives that all of the feedback from other consultation events, the 5 workshops as well as the Council's on line responses, had been captured and reflected upon.
7. JC identified a number of areas where the community considered there were procedural issues with the draft CF. Firstly, it was considered that the document does not satisfy the requirements of District Plan Policy GA1 on the basis that the draft was not prepared with the involvement of the local community, and the CF didn't satisfactorily cover infrastructure requirements and phasing. In addition the status and purpose of the CF wasn't clear and it also didn't refer to the Garden Town work that is ongoing. However it was noted that, while the CF should be more closely aligned to the Garden Town work, it was important to ensure that governance issues relating to the Gilston Area were considered separately. Finally, the CF focused on the site promoter's ownership, and did not consider how further development could be prevented within the Gilston Area boundary identified under Policy GA1.
8. KS stated that the Council was committed to seeking community input on the draft CF and that the document didn't refer to the Garden Town work as the draft



pre-dated the announcement from Government relating to the Harlow and Gilston Garden Town. However, the finalised version would refer to the Garden Town, particularly the visioning and design work currently being undertaken at present by Allies and Morrison. MP noted that the Council had been through a thorough 'sieving' process in order to identify the most appropriate boundary for the Gilston Area, taking account of all land submitted to the Council for consideration. For instance, land to the rear of the Plume of Feathers had been omitted from the boundary as development of that site would effectively function as a relatively large extension to Gilston village. KS noted that, should planning applications for further development, outside of the allocation boundary, be submitted to the Council, these would be considered against the policies in the District Plan and national policy.

9. JB stated that there was concern among the local community that the CF was a 'done deal' and that there is little opportunity for community input. LH and MP stated that the CF was in draft form and that there was a clear commitment to working with local people to revise the document as required.
10. SB suggested that it wasn't helpful for the CF to include words like 'aspirational' in relation to infrastructure and that there needed to be a clearer commitment in the CF to infrastructure provision.
11. MP explained that the developers had reviewed the community's comments and had applied a "RAG" approach with green – accepted and amendment would be made, amber – principle agreed but the CF is not the stage of the planning process where that would be addressed and Red – not agreed (this forms Appendix D to these minutes). The only fundamental area of disagreement is that, in the view of the site promoters, it is important for the CF to be based on the principle of delivering 10,000 homes in that location. This is important to ensure consistency with Policy GA1. MP provided a summary of some of the specific areas of feedback that have already resulted in amendments to the proposals (this forms Appendix E to these minutes). This was presented as a working document but helpfully illustrated changes that could respond to the issues the community had raised. MP acknowledged that these may not have been effectively fed back to the community. This process is continuing with a number of further local discussions underway. These included removing the proposed "Crescent" form of development around Gilston Park and looking at a more organic, dispersed form as well as removing any proposed parameter showing 7 storeys.
12. AB asked whether the finalised CF would guide future planning applications. CB responded by saying that the CF would inform future masterplanning, which in turn, would inform detailed planning applications.
13. KS suggested that the most efficient and effective way of finalising the CF would be to set up a small working group who could meet to discuss and agree amendments, especially in the light of MP's comments that most of the points made were agreed. This suggestion was agreed between the NPG, East Herts and Places for People but it was noted that a date for the first meeting would



need to be after the EiP Hearing. It was suggested that the working group could comprise KS, MP, BT and MO plus others as appropriate.

14. JC noted that the community had highlighted the importance of the wider Garden Town work, particularly with regards infrastructure provision. KS stated that the Council had worked with Harlow and Epping Forest Councils, as well as the two County Councils, for a number of years. This work has covered different topic areas, but has a particular focus on transport matters and the mitigation required to support growth in the wider Harlow area.
15. MJ stated that there was great concern from within the community that the Gilston Area proposals would weaken Green Belt protection which could allow further development in future. LH stated that the only Green Belt proposed for removal was that required for the Gilston Area development and that the remaining Green Belt would not be weakened and would still provide protection in accordance with the NPPF and District Plan.
16. BT expressed concern that the local community were confused with regards the different consultations taking place and the different statutory processes that were being followed e.g. District Plan Examination, CF consultation and consultation on the outline planning application. Clarity needs to be provided to enable the local community to better understand the process, and the timings for which they will be asked to get involved.
17. MP presented a flow diagram showing the planning stages required for the Gilston Area along with potential timescales. The diagram (Appendix F to these minutes) explained that the outline application will develop the CF into a series of “parameters” that set the maximum envelope for any development that may occur as well as the means of access for each. It would also ensure that the infrastructure requirements and phasing is defined and fully committed through the S106. There would be a separate detailed application for the two river crossings. This would then be followed by the village masterplans as well as a Landscape masterplan that would define the parklands, etc. All of these would be done in full consultation with the local communities and other stakeholders.
18. MO stated that it would be helpful for the Council to provide a response to the issues raised by the NPG within their consultation response. KS agreed that would be helpful but re-iterated that the best way forward is to set up a small working group in order to agree changes to the CF. MP stated that her team had started to carefully consider, from the landowner’s perspective, how the CF could be amended to respond to the NPG’s comments. It was agreed that amendments to the CF document would be required to address the issues raised.
19. JC suggested that the community believed that the vision contained within the draft CF was too generic and did not reflect the character of the local areas and should be strengthened in relation to referring to a development of seven distinct villages built to Garden community principles. In addition, reference should be made to existing villages to ensure that the benefits of development are shared by existing as well as new residents. JC also stated that the community was



concerned that the CF seemed to indicate that the Gilston Area was being seen as an extension to Harlow as it refers to topics such as Gibberd's design principles. MP stated that Gibberd's principles that influenced Harlow are still relevant to new developments being planned today.

20. MJ stated that it would help the community if the CF provided more detail about what is meant by a development of seven villages. The community was concerned that some of the images in the CF seem to present a type of development that is more urban. MP noted that the images in the CF provide one way of considering how the development could look. However, it was agreed that the images were probably too detailed and that more suitable images could be inserted into the finalised CF.
21. AB stated that it was important that the Council reviewed the CF document carefully given the substantial amount of change that appeared from the meeting to now be proposed and that a further round of consultation with the local community was imperative on any subsequent draft.
22. AB stated that there needs to be clarity on the phasing of infrastructure. There could be 'quick wins' for the development in terms of delivering certain infrastructure schemes early and in advance of development. This could include, by way of example, open spaces and parklands where it is agreed that they will remain undeveloped and managed by the community. MP agreed with the principle but stated that much of the land is tenanted and so consideration should be given to their requirements. MP stated that there would be clear infrastructure triggers which would be agreed with the Council through the planning application and masterplanning processes. AB noted that East Herts would be providing more information on the strategic infrastructure needed to support Gilston at the end of the week, as requested by the Inspector and asked if that document could be shared directly with the NPG; this was agreed (post meeting note: the Councils' Hearing Statement is available online <https://www.eastherts.gov.uk/article/36041/Hearing-Sessions-Week-3>) .
23. KS suggested that the finalised CF and the subsequent masterplans should have the core concepts fixed but with sufficient flexibility to allow for changing circumstances, particularly for a site that will have a long build out period.
24. SB indicated that the CF should include consideration of how the building work would impact on local communities and how this would be mitigated. KS stated that those issues would be captured through Section 106 agreements and conditions. AB reminded the meeting that the Community sees this as an important issue missing from the CF.
25. MJ stated that some members of the community are concerned that the CF appears to promote the development of seven villages that would have very little physical separation between them. The community had not seen any option appraisal and there had been suggestions that consideration could be given to providing fewer villages with greater separation, building north of the power lines, increasing density, or providing fewer dwellings overall. To a degree the



community needed to know the rationale for the suggested scheme and how adequate separation of the villages would be provided.

26. MP stated that the work presented within the CF includes a thorough assessment of landscape and topography to identify the most suitable areas for development within the site boundary. The village boundaries identified within the CF are maximum boundaries. It was agreed that the images in the CDF had contributed to the community's concerns on this matter. MP explained that the village masterplans would work within the Parameters approved at the outline application stage but would, for example, look at how the "edges" of the villages would be softened into the landscape.
27. MJ suggested that consideration could be given to the hierarchy of neighbourhood centres. In addition some members of the community felt that there should be clear parameters for height and density. The density of Terlings Park (40-42 dwellings per hectare) should be the maximum density for any given area with the new development. MP confirmed that the issue of building heights and other design parameters would be dealt with through the outline planning application. JB suggested that a helpful plan had been included in the outline application materials showing the proposed location of the community facilities, schools etc. and that it would be helpful to include that within the CF. MP agreed.
28. MJ also stated that there was concern amongst the community that the draft CF should provide greater information on current infrastructure issues including sewerage capacity, flooding, water pressure, broadband and mobile phone coverage. MP noted that some issues such as Rye Meads Sewage Treatment works are not just Gilston specific but cover wider areas. KS stated that the CF shouldn't replicate areas already covered within the evidence base for the District Plan. It was agreed that the Council's website should be updated to have an FAQ's section that identifies where residents can find evidence relating to key issues such as the capacity of Rye Meads STW. JBU also stated that it would be helpful for the Council's website to identify which organisations have responsibility for different areas.
29. MJ spoke about residents' support for the principle of delivering a ring road through the development, but that there were concerns that this is shown to be 4-6 carriageways. MP clarified that the images showed 4 carriageways but that these were just an interpretation of what the development could look like. It was agreed that the images be reviewed. The Council stated that there should be an absolute commitment to pedestrian friendly slow and safe roads that promote sustainable travel.
30. MJ stated that there was scepticism/pessimism that people will walk or cycle, as suggested within the CF. She stated that there needs to be bus stops in existing villages such as Gilston, as well as new stops serving the development.
31. JC commented that the community wanted further thought given to governance and the issues of protecting undeveloped areas and community management. KS and MP stated that the landowners of the Gilston Area had undertaken significantly more work than would normally be required for a local plan



Examination process, and whilst there was still more detailed work to be done, that would be progressed if the site is allocated and as part of the outline application.

32. LH stated that a site visit had been made to Chilmington Green in Ashford and that it would be helpful for the NPG to also make a site visit and for arrangements to be made for the developers there to outline how they had dealt with governance issues. MP stated that the issue of governance highlights why all of the open spaces could not be provided at the start of development as there needs to be a process set up by which they get managed.
33. MJ finished the presentation by highlighting some of the community's more localised issues of concern that should be considered in the review of the draft CF, such as the impact of the Second Stort Crossing on Terlings Park and the issue of light pollution associated with floodlighting at sports pitches. MP confirmed that the landowners had already addressed these points as detailed within the feedback presented.

Next Steps:

34. It was agreed that the following steps should be taken:
 - Agree timescales for revising the CF after the District Plan Examination Hearings, with the aim of completing the document by the end of December. East Herts and the landowners will engage in a constructive dialogue with the NPG to review and finalise the document;
 - A working group to be convened between the three parties to review in detail changes to the draft CF, with a meeting to be arranged immediately following the Gilston Examination in Public Hearing Session on 8 November;
 - Agree arrangements for future community engagement in relation to the Gilston Area proposals, including the revised CF;
 - Submit either a Statement of Common Ground or the agreed minutes of this meeting to the Examination in order to demonstrate to the Inspector that constructive dialogue between the parties has taken place and that all parties are committed to working together to agree amendments to the CF following the Examination Hearings.
 - The finalised CF to be formally endorsed by East Herts in order to provide the framework for the preparation of masterplans.

The meeting closed at 10.30pm.

Date of next meeting: 7 December @ 7pm Wallfields