

# 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 jointly prepared by the landowners, the Council and the local community, which identifies design principles, potential land uses, infrastructure requirements and phasing, and will be used as a benchmark in reviewing proposals for development.

### 11.2 Harlow and Gilston Garden Town

- 11.2.1** East Herts Council, Harlow Council and Epping Forest District Council are working in partnership together with Hertfordshire County Council, Essex County Council, Hertfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership, South East Local Enterprise Partnership, land owners and promoters to bring forward transformational growth in the Harlow area.
- 11.2.2** On 2 January 2017, the Government announced its support for the Harlow and Gilston Garden Town. The Councils share a bold vision and set of objectives, recognising that areas in and around Harlow present a number of opportunities to deliver growth of considerable scale and significance. Such growth is key, not only to meet growing pressures of housing and infrastructure need locally, but also to delivering broader regeneration and change for Harlow.

- 11.2.3** The Councils are committed to delivering sustainable growth to support the economic ambitions of the London Stansted Cambridge Corridor (LSCC) through the delivery of housing, supported by good access to social, leisure, community, health facilities, education and jobs, that meet the needs of local people and support sustainable economic growth, whilst ensuring it remains an attractive place for people to live and locate to.
- 11.2.4** The Garden Town will comprise various new developments in the wider Harlow area, within the three local authority areas. The Gilston Area forms a key part of this ambitious project. As such, the proposals for the Gilston Area should complement, and have regard to, ongoing work relating to the Garden Town.

### 11.3 Development in the Gilston Area

- 11.3.1** The main components of the development strategy for the Gilston Area are as follows:
- 11.3.2 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. The site will also provide for the accommodation needs of Gypsies and Travellers and Travelling Showpeople and make provision for self-build and/or custom build opportunities.
- 11.3.3 Education:** the site will deliver land for twenty forms of entry for both primary and secondary education in order to fully cater for the needs arising from the development. Early Years Education will also be provided for.
- 11.3.4 Transport:** a wide range of small and large scale interventions including sustainable transport measures, will be required to ensure that development in the wider Harlow area, including the Gilston Area, 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 include a new Junction 7a on the M11, upgrades to Junctions 7 & 8, a second River Stort crossing, widening of the existing crossing, and upgrades to the Amwell Roundabout. 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.
- 11.3.5 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 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.
- 11.3.6 Employment:** the development will provide local employment, including small scale office space. This will be in the form of either a business park of 5ha or distributed across the village centres having regard to Garden City principles. 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 Stansted Airport, Cambridge, Bishop's Stortford and London.

**11.3.7 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 as part of wider managed parklands including continuing farming 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, and woodland areas to the north of the site will be enhanced by planting and management schemes.

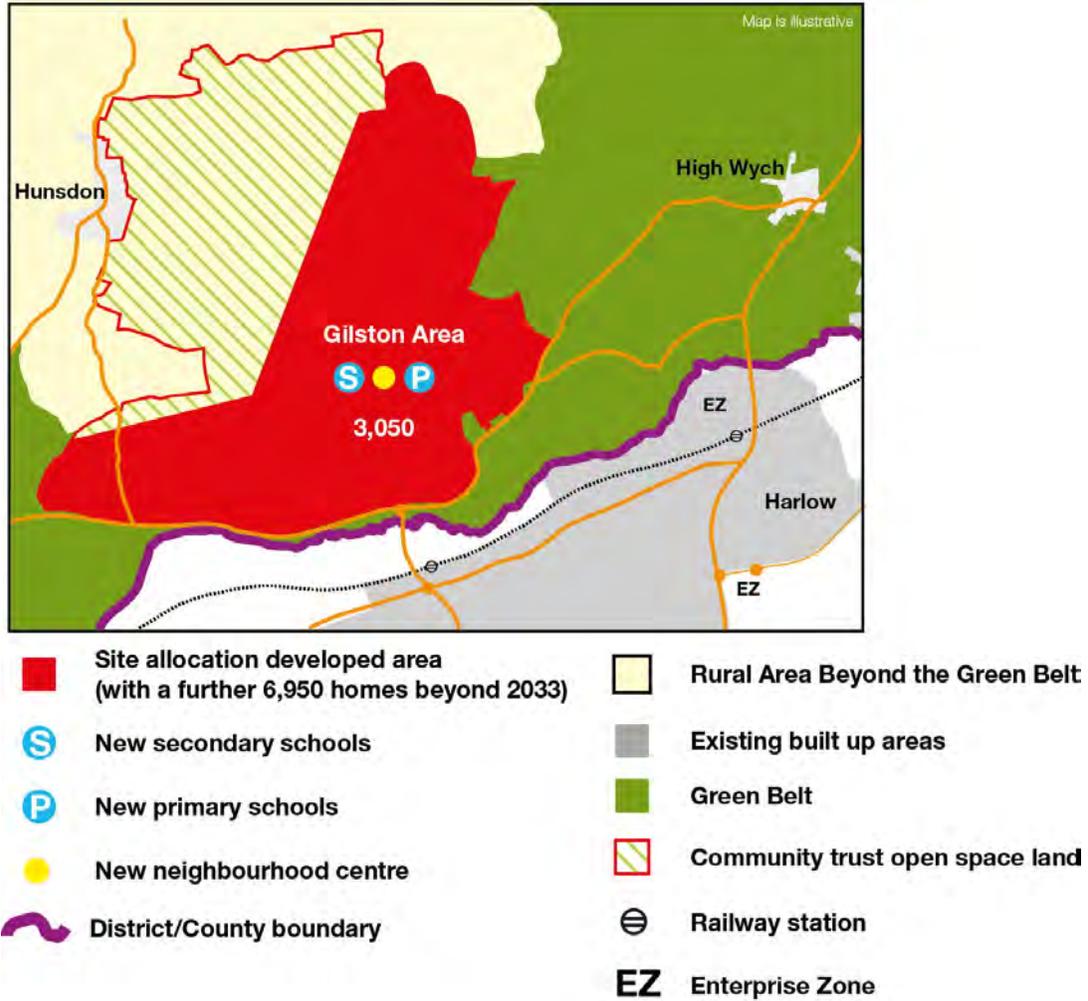
**11.3.8 Character:** The development will be of high quality design, with careful consideration given to layout, architecture, building heights and materials. It will also be sensitively integrated visually in the wider context of the surrounding landscape. Landscape buffers will be provided in order to maintain the distinct identities of Eastwick and Gilston villages within the context of the overall development.

**11.3.9 Heritage:** The site contains a number of heritage assets, including listed buildings and Scheduled Monuments. The development will be designed in order to ensure that these assets and their settings are conserved and, where appropriate, enhanced within the context of the overall development, through appropriate mitigation measures, having regard to the Heritage Impact Assessment (Montagu Evans, October 2017). Gilston Park (the designed landscape), a locally important historic asset, is also located within the Gilston Area. Development will be designed to respect this asset.

**11.3.10 Ecology and Environment:** The development will retain and protect important hedgerows, Local 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 having regard to the objectives of the River Stort Catchment Management Plan.

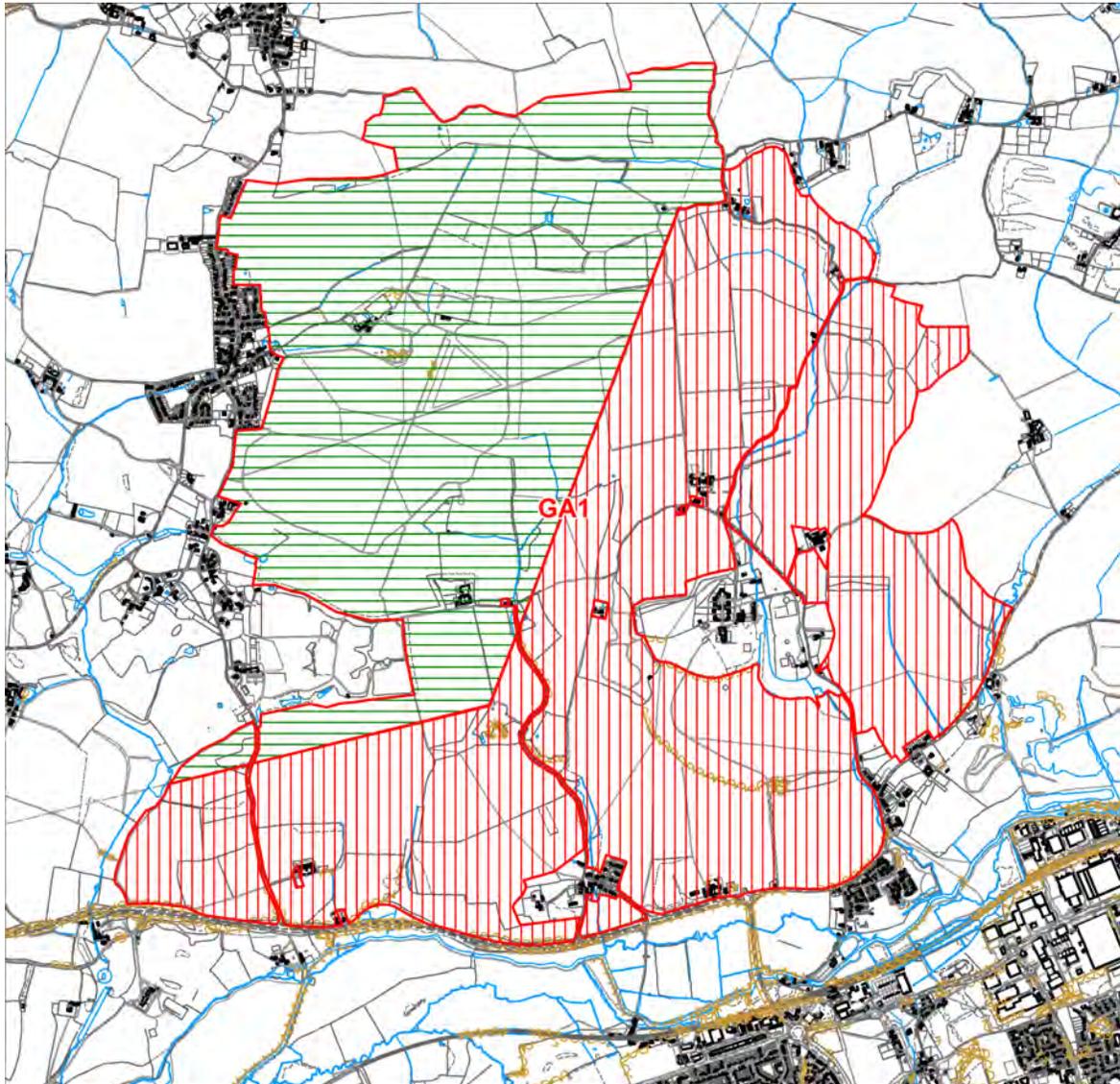
**11.3.11** The main features of the policy approach to development in the Gilston Area are shown on Figure 11.1 below:

Figure 11.1: Key Diagram for the Gilston Area



**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 at least 3,000 homes will be delivered by 2033.

II. A Concept Framework is being jointly prepared by the landowners, the Council and the local community. The Concept Framework identifies design principles, potential land uses, infrastructure requirements and phasing, and will be used as a benchmark in reviewing proposals for development. Prior to the submission of any planning

application(s) further design work through the pre-application engagement process will be required in order to agree, among other things, the quantum and distribution of land uses, access and layout principles.

III. The Gilston Area will provide for 10,000 homes across distinct villages, each based on Garden City principles respecting the following:

- strong vision, leadership and community engagement;
- land value capture to deliver the social and physical infrastructure for the benefit of the community;
- long-term community ownership of land and stewardship of assets;
- mixed-tenure homes and housing types including those that are genuinely affordable;
- a wide range of local jobs within easy commuting distance of homes;
- beautifully and imaginatively designed homes with access to open space, combining the best of town and country to create healthy communities, and including opportunities to grow food;
- development that enhances the natural environment, providing a comprehensive green infrastructure network and net biodiversity gains, and that uses energy-positive technology to ensure climate resilience;
- strong cultural, recreational and shopping facilities in walkable, vibrant, sociable communities; and
- integrated and accessible sustainable transport systems, with walking, cycling and public transport designed to be the most attractive forms of local transport for new residents to travel within the Gilston Area and to key local destinations.

IV. A community engagement strategy will be prepared, working with the two local parishes, which will include consideration of managing the effects on local residents, and opportunities for them to participate in the emerging new community. Engagement with the local communities and other relevant stakeholders shall take place through the planning application process and through the development of village Masterplans.

V. 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 and Custom Build Housing in accordance with Policy HOU8 (Self-Build and Custom Build Housing);

(e) the 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) the 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. This will include the protection of Local Wildlife Sites and other assets of environmental value;

(h) the provision of significant managed 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 stewardship and governance for the benefit of the community;

(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 the provision of additional crossings to the River Stort;

(k) land for twenty forms of entry for both primary and secondary education, including Early Years facilities, subject to more detailed modelling. All schools should provide for the dual use of facilities for community purposes;

(l) sustainable transport measures which encourage walking, cycling and the use of public transport 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 the urban area of Harlow; and;
- the setting of objectives and targets for the use of sustainable transport modes.

(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) the protection and enhancement of heritage assets and their settings, both on-site and in the wider area through appropriate mitigation measures, having regard to the Heritage Impact Assessment. Gilston Church and the Johnston Monument (both grade I listed), the moated site Scheduled Monuments at Eastwick, the Mount Scheduled Monument, and Gilston Park house (grade II\*) are of particular significance and sensitivity and any planning application should seek to ensure that these assets and their settings are conserved and, where appropriate, enhanced, through careful design; landscaping; open space; buffer zones; protection of key views; and, better management and interpretation of assets, where appropriate;

(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) employment area/s (of around 5ha), within visible and accessible location/s, which provides appropriate opportunities to promote self-containment and sustainability;

(r) consideration of opportunities for local supply chains as well as opportunities for local employment and training including apprenticeships and improving skills base for local people;

(s) indoor and outdoor sports facilities (which may be shared use) taking into account the Council's evidence on sports and open space needs;

(t) consideration of need for cemetery provision;

(u) landscaping and planting, both within the site and peripheral, which responds to the existing landscape and complements development, as appropriate, and a defined recognisable boundary to the Green Belt;

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

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

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

(y) sustainable drainage and provision for flood mitigation;

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

VI. Any application for development will include an indicative phasing plan for the delivery of infrastructure and utilities across the villages.

VII. The delivery of the Gilston Area will include a mechanism for:

- securing the long term stewardship, protection and maintenance of the parkland, open spaces, play areas and community assets;
- managing the construction process to address potential impacts on existing and future communities;
- encouraging a successful and active community, including an innovative approach to create the conditions for local resident participation in the design and stewardship of their new communities.

VIII. Proposals for the Gilston Area should complement, and have regard to, ongoing work in relation to the Harlow and Gilston Garden Town.

## 11.4 The River Stort Crossings

**11.4.1** 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.

**11.4.2** 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 as it provides relief to junctions along the western end of the A414 Edinburgh Way in Harlow, and 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.

- 11.4.3** In accordance with 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.
- 11.4.4** Widening of the existing River Stort Crossing will help facilitate the provision of a sustainable transport corridor which will connect the Gilston Area to the urban area of Harlow.

### **Policy GA2 The River Stort Crossings**

I. 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).

II. Development proposals for both Stort Crossings should protect and, where appropriate, enhance heritage assets and their settings through appropriate mitigation measures, having regard to the Heritage Impact Assessment.

