
Gilston Area Education Provision

Explanatory Note

Introduction

- 1.1. The guiding principle for the Gilston Area masterplan is to provide a primary and secondary school place for every child within the development, when they first need it. It will also provide a nursery school or crèche in every one of its seven villages.
- 1.2. Places for People (PfP) has worked with Hertfordshire County Council (HCC) (which is responsible for ensuring there are enough school places across the County) to ensure that the masterplan has the space to provide enough places and that they can be delivered when they are needed.
- 1.3. City and Provincial Properties (CPP), who would bring forward the far western part of the 10,000 housing allocation known as Village 7, would deliver their own primary school with sufficient places to meet the needs of Village 7. Village 7 would also be served by the planned secondary school provision within Gilston Park Estate.
- 1.4. PfP's experience, particularly at Milton Keynes, is that early delivery of schools is a key part of community building and place making, and having a good school on-site is important for attracting potential homebuyers. As a result the provision of school places has formed a key part of the Gilston Area masterplanning process.
- 1.5. Planning for schools places is inherently uncertain, as well as being subject to changes in Government guidance. There have been significant changes in guidance over the last five years and it is almost certain there will be more before the Gilston Area masterplan is fully built out. For these reasons, the masterplan provides a degree of flexibility whilst also complying with current guidance.

Estimating Demand

- 1.6. Forecasting demand for school places is subject to significant uncertainties. Fluctuations can occur even within well-established areas as families move in and out and children move between schools in the state and private sectors and between different Local Education Authorities (LEAs). At this stage, it is therefore important to recognise the need for flexibility and that over-provision of places can cause significant problems for schools and LEAs. A plan, monitor and manage approach will be necessary.
- 1.7. As a starting point, HCC has provided PfP with its own estimate of demand based on a masterplan of 10,000 units built at two delivery rates – 500 and 600 housing completions per year. The results were provided in terms of Forms of Entry (FE), i.e. the number of forms of 30 pupils in each year group. At primary level a 1FE school equals 210 children (one form each of 30 children in Reception and Years 1 to 6) and at secondary it equals 150 children (one form each of 30 children in Years 7 to 11, i.e. children up to age 16 who sit their GCSEs).
- 1.8. Based on HCC's 500 homes per annum model (the current masterplan annual delivery rate is 509 homes per year), the results are as follows:
- Primary**
 - Peak demand of 14.8FE (peaks of over 14FE were identified for 5 years, and peaks of over 13FE for 9 years)
 - Long term average of 10.9FE.
 - Secondary**
 - Peak demand of 13.8FE (peaks of over 13FE were identified for 10 years)
 - Long term average of 9.4FE.
- 1.9. HCC also advised that temporary accommodation could be used as a means of satisfying peaks in demand if cost-effective. This would help ensure that permanent provision is more closely aligned with long-term demand, rather than seeking to meet short-term peaks and leaving excess capacity.

- 1.10. For smaller schemes, HCC uses a range of 1FE per 500 to 800 homes. We agree with HCC that this would not be an appropriate estimate for a large scheme that will be delivered over many years, such as in the Gilston Area. The first children to live in the development will have completed school before children in the later phases have moved in.

Meeting Demand

- 1.11. The masterplan includes the following education provision:
- Five 3FE primary schools: a total of 15 Forms of Entry at primary school.
 - Two 7FE secondary schools: a total of 14 Forms of Entry at secondary school.
- 1.12. This is sufficient to meet HCC's estimated short and long term peaks for school provision.
- 1.13. As set out above, HCC has indicated that temporary accommodation can be used if necessary to meet demand (and agreed by HCC and the schools). In addition, PfP and CPP are committed to constantly monitoring the demand for school places as homes are delivered and occupied and responding accordingly. For example, should delivery of an additional 1FE of secondary school places be identified as necessary, the two sites in the masterplan are sufficiently large to accommodate this. 7 FE is a standard size for a secondary school and there are seven existing secondary schools within Hertfordshire that are seven forms of entry or more.

Parental Choice

- 1.14. Parental choice is important and some parents may choose schools off-site. If some children were to travel off-site this could then free up places on-site for other local children from Harlow or Hertfordshire. Therefore, it can be reasonably assumed that there will not be a net increase in demand for places at existing schools in either Essex or Hertfordshire arising from the development.
- 1.15. It is also likely that some parents will choose schools in the independent sector. This would reduce levels of demand. At present 11% of secondary school pupils in Hertfordshire are educated privately. A similar proportion could be expected in the Gilston Area, but this has not been assumed in the modelling done to date in order to ensure that the projected demand is robust.

Delivering School Places

- 1.16. The Gilston Area will ensure that the delivery of school places is in line with housing delivery by monitoring progress to ensure that the timescales of delivery are adhered to.
- 1.17. The delivery of school places has been carefully modelled against the delivery of new homes and as a result the delivery of school places will start alongside the first completion of new homes (anticipated to be in the period 2019-2021). In order to ensure that the first occupiers have school places on-site, the potential for flexible delivery mechanisms is being considered and will be discussed with school operators (e.g. multi-age classes in the lower years for the early phases), which will help to ensure that schools can open from day-one and provide a good quality education.
- 1.18. For the first FE of secondary school places the provision could come forward in temporary accommodation alongside a primary school site, if this is needed and considered appropriate by the school operators.
- 1.19. The delivery of new school places is subject to change with central Government policy. When the schools are provided, the mechanism for delivery will be in accordance with the Government and Department for Education policy and guidance in place at the time. The Gilston Area will work in partnership with the Education Funding Agency, HCC and EHDC to ensure that the plans for each school meet local and national aspirations – both in terms of the physical fabric and design of the schools and their operation.
- 1.20. Under current policy, this means that the both the primary and secondary schools would be delivered as academies to the standards set out in Building Bulletin 103 (June 2014). The schools will all have access to high quality open space and playspace.

The Schools and the Community

- 1.21. PfP and CPP want the schools to be at the heart of the new communities. PfP has a long standing commitment to ensuring the delivery of high quality schools places. It is therefore envisaged that many of their facilities will be open for community use when not needed by the school, including open space, sports pitches and halls. This could be linked to initiatives for lifelong learning. The secondary schools will have access to a new community sports and leisure centre with a wide range of indoor and outdoor facilities.
- 1.22. Combining community and school access to sports facilities will allow schools to have access to a wider range of facilities at a lower cost and keep facilities for both school and community access viable to run and maintain in perpetuity. PfP has extensive experience of managing sport and leisure facilities, with 115 existing centres around the UK which are managed on behalf of local authorities to offer affordable leisure activities.
- 1.23. The two secondary schools will be co-located as this is the best location within the Gilston Area, on the cycle and road network with extensive access to playing fields and with superb views over greenspaces.

Conclusion

- 1.24. Based on HCC's advice, the Gilston Area masterplan can meet the educational needs of the development. The design of the masterplan places education at the heart of new communities, alongside a commitment to monitor school delivery with new homes to ensure sufficient capacity exists at the right time.
- 1.25. The school sites have sufficient capacity to meet the level of need identified by HCC, namely:
- 15FE of primary provision (with an estimated long-term requirement for 11FE)
 - 14FE of secondary provision (with an estimated long-term requirement for 10FE)
- 1.26. The Gilston Area masterplan demonstrates that this need can be met on-site.