GILSTON AREA
Draft Neighbourhood Plan

HEGNPG

Supporting our Community

1

2

Neighbourhood Plan Group

3

Green Belt release – exceptional circumstances

4

CONCEPT FRAMEWORK

- Produced as part of emerging District Plan by Developers & EHDC
- Extensive Community Engagement and Collaboration 58/60
- Passed the EIP and accepted as "**Benchmark**" for development in the DP
- Not an SPD though and fears of dilution in the planning process.

5

Concept Framework v. 2

✓58/60

6

7 Hertfordshire villages in landscape setting …….

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…..or urban extensions a key question?

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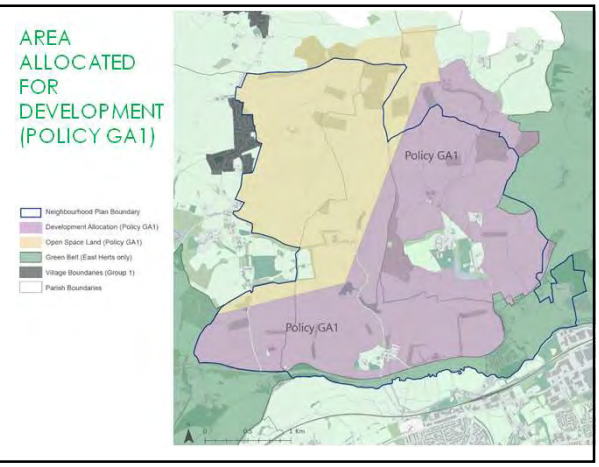
AREA ALLOCATED FOR DEVELOPMENT (POLICY GA1)



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INTENSE PROACTIVE PARTICIPATION

- Strong views about relationship with the countryside
- Rejection of urban / suburban character
- Concerns about infrastructure

12

13

Purpose of Neighbourhood Plan

- Continuity of constructive collaboration
- Essentially based on the **Concept Framework** (as agreed) – especially **Vision** and **Objectives**
- Giving it more weight in decision making
- Adding a **community perspective** and focus on local priorities
- Aim to get the plan in place as quickly as possible to influence proposals

14

15

Neighbourhood Plan – Process so Far

- Reg. 14 Consultation: Sept-Oct 2019
- 550 individual comments received and analysed (see Log Book)
- Extensive corrections
- Meetings with local authority and developers to continue collaboration

16

VISION

- **Distinct villages** each of individual character
- Positive **relationship with existing settlements**
- **Meaningful separation** and high-quality landscape
- Cohesive and enhanced **rural landscape**
- Compact centre, with softer edges
- Design to respond to **local context and architecture**
- Range of housing types and tenures
- Modal shift to reduce car dependency
- Encourage participation in community life
- Phased **infrastructure** provision to mitigate impacts
- Draw on **Garden City principles**

17

OBJECTIVES

1. CREATING DISTINCTIVE AND BALANCED COMMUNITIES
2. MAINTAINING DISTINCTIVENESS AND MANAGING IMPACTS ON EXISTING VILLAGES
3. DELIVERING A WIDE CHOICE OF QUALITY HOMES
4. WELL CONNECTED TO, BUT DISTINCTIVE FROM, HARLOW
5. PROMOTING HEALTHY COMMUNITIES
6. PROMOTING SUSTAINABLE TRAVEL
7. CREATING WALKABLE NEIGHBOURHOODS
8. PROMOTING HIGH QUALITY DESIGN
9. A PROTECTED AND ENHANCED LANDSCAPE AND NETWORK OF GREEN SPACES
10. PROTECTING AND ENHANCING NATURAL ASSETS
11. PROTECTING AND ENHANCING HERITAGE ASSETS
12. ENGAGING LOCAL COMMUNITIES
13. ENSURING THE PHASED DELIVERY OF NECESSARY INFRASTRUCTURE

18

19

QUESTIONS

- Is the GANP strong enough about the need for a continuous rural landscape?
- Is the concept of Village Character clear and achievable?
- Are Garden City principles well supported by the policies?
- Are the policies sufficiently robust to deliver timely infrastructure to support new and existing communities?
- Is the balance right between local views and the aspirations of future residents (and developers)?
- Is there sufficient clarity for developers and planning authority about the priorities of the community?

20

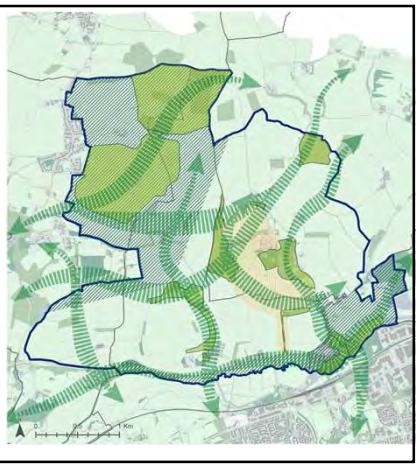
21

HARLOW AND GILSTON GARDEN TOWN VISION

'Villages in the landscape' in Gilston and districts separated by corridors in Harlow

22

INDICATIVE GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE NETWORK



23

Policy AG3: Creating a Connected Green Infrastructure Network

- Protecting local ecology and landscape features
- Preparation of overall Landscape Masterplan
- Connected **green corridors of adequate width** to safeguard biodiversity and wildlife, separate villages and ensure walking and cycling access to countryside
- Natural/open landscape setting
- Designation of Local Green Spaces
- Retention in perpetuity with provision for long term maintenance

24

Policy AG4: Protecting and Enhancing the Countryside Setting

- Contained development and mitigation of visual impacts
- Villages to be set in **rural landscape** and separated by fields and woodland buffers
- Maintain open rural character and local planting style
- Designation as '**Natural Greenspace**' (Natural England)
- Limit visual and noise **pollution from urbanisation** and from sport pitches at the edge of the new villages
- Enhance biodiversity
- Preserve and enhance historic boundaries

25

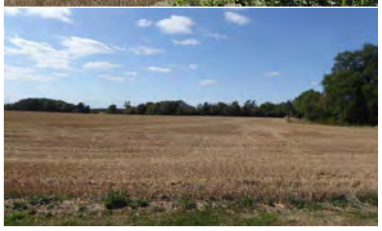
Policy AG6: Maintaining the Individuality and Separation of All Villages

- Establishment of Community Boundaries to protect setting of existing settlements
- Maintain buffers of sufficient width to separate new and existing communities and villages
- Creation of distinctive new villages with individual identity
- Protection and enhancement of Stort Valley
- Early delivery of landscape improvements to strengthen green buffers

26

MEANINGFUL SEPARATION:

The separation between Widford and Hunsdon



27

SOFT VILLAGE EDGES

A. Typical village soft edge (Gilston Hall new development); B. Soft edge of Widford looking towards Hunsdon; C. New housing edge at Hunsdon seen from the Airfield; D. Established house edge at Gilston Lane

28

Is the concept of Village Character clear and achievable?

29

Policy AG7 Securing Hertfordshire Village Character in design of New Villages

- Layout of new villages to be informed by typical Hertfordshire village layout and character, landscape and heritage assets
- Design to be contemporary and innovative but appropriate to location in terms of scale and materials
- Villages to be distinct from urban character of Harlow
- Each village to have a compact centre

30

31

What defines a Village?

- A main spine or village street
- Views over *open* landscape from within the core of the village
- Blocks of natural / semi-natural landscape bring the rural landscape into the village
- Access roads are narrow with hedgerows and trees
- Arrival into the village does not present a 'gateway' but a transition area
- Main spine is the focal point of the community- typically narrow and pedestrian friendly
- Heights are typically two-storey with the ridge typically lower than crown of trees
- Variety of built form and massing
- 'Soft' and informal edges, without continuous frontages or repetitive rooflines

32

How is this translated into Policy?

Layout to be **informed by analysis** of typical Hertfordshire village layout and character, relationship with landscape and its informality and diversity with reference to existing landscape, traditional development patterns and heritage assets to create distinctive and individual village character. This should be reflected in:

i. Clear **visual integration of the countryside;**
ii. A range of **densities appropriate** and characteristic of villages;
iii. Building **heights and massing suitable to village informality**
iv. Scale and design of **streets and lanes** should be **narrow, informal** and predominantly green;
v. Softer edges - with **no prominent** buildings or visually dominant built **frontage**.

33

Specific guidance for Village Master Plans and future development

- **BU1: Housing and Residential Neighbourhoods**
  - Adapted to context and with heights and density characteristic of a village
- **BU2: Village Cores / Centres**
  - Mix of uses, pedestrian orientated space, served by public transport
- **BU3: Employment Areas**
  - Preferably within village centres, or at least well integrated pedestrian and cycle friendly area
- **BU4: Village Streets and Lanes**
  - Typical informality of villages, slow speed, pedestrian friendly, abundant green space

34

35

Garden City Principles

- Strong vision, leadership and community engagement;
- Land value capture;
- Long-term community ownership of land and stewardship
- Mixed-tenure homes;
- A wide range of local jobs within easy commuting distance;
- Beautifully designed homes with access to open space;
- enhance natural environment and ensure climate resilience;
- Strong cultural, recreational and shopping facilities;
- Promote walking, cycling and public transport.

36

NO SINGLE SPECIFIC POLICY – BUT A GOLDEN THREAD

- AG5 – New country park on Hunsdon Airfield and Eastwick Woods; community open land
- AG9 – Infrastructure improvements for existing settlements
- C2 – Community Ownership and Stewardship of future assets / Governance agreement
- EX1 – Mitigating impacts on existing communities
- ID1 – Community Partnership

37

Are the policies sufficiently robust to deliver timely infrastructure to support new and existing communities?

38

Policy AG2: Minimising Impact of Traffic and New Road Infrastructure

- Design of new roads to **minimise impact on existing communities** and avoid severance
- Minimise adverse impacts in terms of safety, road speed, pollution and impacts on local character
- Limit additional traffic on existing roads
- No increase in heavy vehicle movements through existing communities

39

Policy AG8: Phasing of Infrastructure Delivery

- Requirement for Infrastructure Delivery Strategy to demonstrate how needs of **new and existing communities** will be met
- Phased delivery **in relation to needs** to be secured through legal agreement (not as required by standards)
- Requirement for public consultation on timescale for provision

40

Policy AG9: Infrastructure Improvements for the Existing Settlements

- Explore how to enable access to newly provided community and technical facilities
- Connections to upgraded services
- Improvements to public transport services
- Extended network of pedestrian, cycle and public transport routes

41

Policy EX1 Mitigating the Impacts of Development and Enhancing Existing Villages

- New development required to demonstrate how existing settlements will be enhanced and mitigation of impacts
- Provision for early landscape improvements to strengthen buffers
- Long term maintenance of green and public spaces

42

43

Community Position

- GANP seeks to stay within the boundary of what was **jointly agreed** in the Concept Framework
- Plan area includes new and existing villages
- Guidance for new development supplemented by emphasis on improving and integrating existing communities
- Aspirations of new residents- shared objectives
- Framework for on-going community engagement (existing and new)

44

GANP seeks to strike a balance

- Over 550 comments at Reg. 14 consultation (see Log Book)
- Some residents want stricter policies- density, height etc
- Some residents want less strict policies- parking, sustainable transport etc
- Developers want greater flexibility (especially on the 'village' concept)
- More detail provided by statutory consultees- natural environment and climate change

45

Is there sufficient clarity for developers and planning authority about the priorities of the community?

46

GANP has a clear structure

A. Accommodating Growth
   - 'strategic' policies
   - Whole site scale
   - How to structure the development to reflect local character and context and minimise impacts on existing communities

B. Delivering Quality Places
   - More detailed policies on design of villages
   - Landscape, Built-up Areas, Heritage, Community Assets, Mobility and Transport

C. Improving Existing Settlements
   - Encouraging a positive outcome for all in the community- new and existing

D. Implementation and Delivery
   - The type of on-going collaboration the community would like to have

47

Key priorities

- Landscape setting
- Village character
- Timely infrastructure provision
- Mitigating impacts on existing communities
- Sharing benefits - land value capture
- Community ownership and stewardship
- An active on-going role

48

Balancing 'trade-offs'

Developers want to retain (too much?) flexibility:

Places for People: OPA for 9,900 and heights up to 5 floors (18m above ground)

Briggens Estate 1: OPA for 1,500 units, 60 dph in places (higher than HGGT Design Guide), typically 3 floors (13m) and 5 floors in places

Concept Framework estimated average density of **33dph**: no need for more than three storeys

Based on approximate calculations:

Places for People: total village areas around 275ha / i.e. 9,000 units @33dph average or 8,500 @41dph with 75% only as residential land

Briggens Estate 1: around 62ha / i.e. 2,046 @33dph average or 1,500@32dph with 75% only as residential land

No easy way for the community to assess what kind of trade offs are **really needed**

49

Example – Beaulieu Park ('A new **District in the City** of Chelmsford')

Apartments – 12m to roofline

3 floor townhouses – 12m to roofline

Beaulieu Square (District Centre Mixed use) – max 14m to roofline

50

A necessity or a choice?

51

NEXT STEPS

- Changes to Draft Plan in response to consultation– March 2020
- Plan to be submitted to EHDC for Examination
- Amendments to Plan
- Referendum (September 2020?)

52