

Gilston Area Neighbourhood Plan: March 2020 Additional Comments on Draft

General Comments:

Firstly, I want to say that this document represents a significant step forward compared to the version we saw at Regulation 14. The Plan as a whole reads much better as a policy document than the previous version, the policies display far more flexibility necessary to deliver Policy GA1 whilst still retaining their intent, and clarity has been improved and provided on a number of areas that were requested.

I should note, that the comments below are those made by an individual officer in response to the request to provide additional comments on the Plan and are not from the Council. In order to identify and assist the community group with its plan following fairly significant changes from Reg. 14 I have tried to keep consistency with those comments and suggest alternatives where possible. Likewise I have also tried to stay aligned with the QRP's comments.

I am happy for these comments to be used as part of a wider-dialogue and would encourage you to contact me to discuss any areas where you either need assistance or would like further details additional to that provided below.

One general point; because the policies at the start of the document are often quite broad in nature and not as focussed as they perhaps could be; it can devalue those that come slightly later on in the document and their subsequent necessity. It also raises the issue in some cases of having two or more policies that address the same area but in slightly different ways which will create conflicts and confusion unnecessarily. I have tried to bring this to your attention in some cases but the Plan would certainly benefit from an audit ensuring that policy overlaps and repeats are avoided, in some cases this may need some fairly rigorous deleting of text. One clear policy, on one subject is more useful to a decision-maker than numerous policies relating to the same or similar issues and so deleting and cutting back policies should not be seen as devaluing any points or issues.

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Chapter 1: Introduction		
Section 1	4	Title might benefit from being moved onto new page (page 5) for clarity
1.1	5	<p>First sentence might benefit from slight change of language to better describe that the green belt was released through the Local Plan process rather than by the document itself. Sentence could read;</p> <p><i>“...Gilston and Eastwick was released when the East Herts District Plan was adopted in October 2018 in order to accommodate...”</i></p>
Chapter 4: Vision and Objectives		
Overview	32	<p>I think the bullet points in paragraph 4.1 needs to be rearranged slightly , bullet 1 might be better at the end so that it is clear that the developers endorse the final document that was approved at Council rather than the document that was published prior to any public consultation.</p> <p>Likewise, is it correct to state that the Parish Council and Neighbourhood Plan Group modified and agreed the concept framework vision and objectives – or is this referring to the vision and objectives now being presented in the NP? Clarity needed as to which vision and objectives are being referred to as although similar, they are not identical.</p>
Chapter 5: Neighbourhood Plan Policies		
General		
All Policies	-	Consider deleting the policy number e.g. ‘AG1’, ‘C2’ etc. from the section titles to help clarity in

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		distinguishing between supporting text and the actual policy.
Policies		
5.4	45	Reference to GT Design Guide is figure 14 (on page 66) but reference in text is to figure 15.
5.17	47	Appreciate this is a concern from the community and an understandable one – I think, if there is the opportunity to temper some of the expectations though it should be taken where possible. What I mean by that, is that of course the development of 10,000 dwellings will substantially change the current rural setting of the area and so this does need to be reflected. Likewise, development economics do not support the forward-funding of infrastructure in general (although it will be secured where possible). Whilst I appreciate that this is the perspective of the community – it might help if sometimes the limitations of what can be achieved are explained alongside this perspective to assist the reader in understanding why the policy is worded (usually more flexibly) in this way, despite the stronger community perspective. The example of this is 2 iv. of Policy AG1 which sets out a pragmatic policy for dealing with infrastructure.
AG1	48	Criterion 2, part i. This criterion provides a tricky notion because of the words ‘be appropriate to the character of the area and existing settlements’ – because the character of the area is likely to substantially change with this

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		<p>development. I wonder whether deleting those words highlighted above and starting the policy at ‘Provide living and working...’ would help to acknowledge this and character and landscape are addressed in other policies anyway so you wouldn’t be losing anything with this deletion.</p> <p>Part v. is there a conflict with having a ‘landscape-led approach’ and a ‘predominance of the landscape’ – maybe just use one of the terms to avoid any confusion. <u>YES we should use more the language of p80 CF</u></p> <p>Part ix. This policy appears to deal with a landscape and visual separation point as well as a design (of the built form) point. Considering the built-form is to be dealt with in detail in other policies I would recommend deleting the words ‘and distinguished in built form from Harlow’ so that the criterion is more focussed and doesn’t repeat something that is addressed comprehensively later on.</p> <p>Part xiii. Again, I think the reality is that morphology and character of settlements in the NP area do not lend themselves to the delivery of GA1 – it might be better to either delete this criterion completely (because it will be addressed in AG7 anyway) or at least delete the words ‘the morphology and character’ so that it is clear the</p>

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		policy relates to design.
5.22		Might it be useful to reference the HGGT Sustainable Transport Strategy in this paragraph?
AG2	50	<p>I think in the previous meeting, I commented on some of the potential issues I had with this policy – whilst I appreciate the addition of this policy is a response to the communities concerns I still wonder whether the individual criterion fit better in other policies rather as one policy that simultaneously covers, roads; traffic and water run-off.</p> <p>On a separate note – part 1. Refers to the design of road infrastructure minimising damage to the rural and village character of the area. Whilst I think its fine to talk about minimising impacts on communities and avoiding severance – I think we need to be realistic that some infrastructure (the River Stort crossing) is substantial and will be unable to demonstrate anything close to a rural or village character.</p>
AG3	54	<p>Criterion 1 ii – I would delete reference to the ‘development boundary’ that way the criterion applies to the whole Plan area. <u>But not the Stort Valley or Hunsdon Brook</u>. Criterion would finish after ‘...waterbodies’.</p> <p>Criterion 1, Part iii – instead of development</p>

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		<p>and implementation of woodland management plans, it should read ‘establishment or creation of and implementation of ...’ This is to avoid confusion in development management terms over what is meant by ‘development’.</p> <p>Criterion 2, final paragraph refers to ‘Green and Infrastructure Network’ – is the ‘and’ a typo or is it referring to the Green Infrastructure Network, <i>and</i> a separate Infrastructure Network? Clarity should be provided here to ensure no confusion.</p> <p>Criterion 2, Part ii. bullet 1 – does it need the word ‘and’ between corridors and connections? It also describes “...<i>green belt/green wedges that abut ...Epping Forest and Hatfield Forest.</i>” Whilst I appreciate the point you are trying to make is that there are wider considerations and not just those in the immediate area. The inclusion of the word ‘abut’ and then listing Epping and Hatfield Forest which are some distance away might confuse the decision-maker. I would be tempted to reword for more clarity.</p> <p>Criterion 2, Part ii. bullet 2 – is essentially another version of policy AG6 (and references it) to avoid any overlap I would perhaps just look to cross-reference in the following way; “<i>Green corridors to be incorporated and</i></p>

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		<p><i>contribute to the goal of distinct villages as set out in policy AG6”</i></p> <p>Criterion 2, Part iv – needs a definition of what is an important view. Is it from high points across, is it towards built or natural landmarks, or even from particular landmarks – crossover here between other heritage impact setting issues. An opportunity for a diagram perhaps.</p> <p>Criterion 2, Part vi – is there duplication here with other water management policies? If this criterion is attempting to integrate water management into the GI network then it should be phrased as such, also, the traditional ditch and pond features are likely to be sufficient.</p> <p>Criterion 3 – Local Green Space – should it be a reference to Figure 13? Welcome the additional reference to NPPF but, regarding LGS still can’t see any reference to the supporting evidence as needed to meet the NPPF requirements. Typo; too many ‘onlys’.</p>
AG4	59	<p>Criterion 1: Maintaining our point during the previous consultation as well as the QRP’s comments about ensuring the strategic objectives can still be delivered we would welcome the use of ‘where possible’ or other wording that reflects that containing development and mitigating visual impacts on the current</p>

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		<p>landscape needs to be balanced with the delivery of District Plan policy GA1 and the allocation of this area for the delivery of 10,000 homes.</p> <p>Criterion 2: first bracket says ‘as defined’ in AG3 – it might be worth deleting ‘as defined’ as AG3 only sets out the policy context for a GI network and doesn’t explicitly define it. It should also be noted that all of the types of ‘area’ that are described would all contribute towards GI so the wording of the policy could perhaps be better worded to reflect this. Typo; areas <u>of</u> woodland.</p> <p>Criterion 3: plant species of the rural setting – do they mean arable field species?</p> <p>Criterion 7: the tense seems wrong</p> <p>Criterion 8: Further flexibility here would be welcomed, maybe by saying “Villages (new and existing) should be clearly set within the rural landscape and their distinct separation should utilise natural features such as fields or woodland blocks as meaningful buffers”, or alternatively delete the reference altogether to the separation of villages and instead cross-reference to policy AG6 which far more comprehensively deals with the issue. Typo; in last sentence - <u>ad</u>.</p>

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AG5		<p>Previously we raised the issue as to whether designating something as a formal Country Park was in the Neighbourhood Plan's gift, or indeed a desirable outcome. Please revisit and ensure this as there could be big implications regarding the role and function and also in terms of impact on traffic generation.</p> <p>Criterion 2 – the termination of existing uses is a tricky subject and may not be within the scope of a NP, and in order for any sort of use-class style policy there would need to be accompanying definitions.</p> <p>Criterion 3 – is not completed.</p> <p>Criterion 4, Part iii – could be too restrictive. It might be more effective if you just reference 'recreation', rather than 'informal'</p> <p>Criterion 4, Part v – Whilst I note the wording is restrictive, car parking may conflict with other strategies such as sustainable transport and mode shift ambitions. The park may become an attractor for those travelling from further afield and the provision of parking may encourage unsustainable trips and unnecessary movement around the locality as drivers will look to find spaces if the car parks are small. It may be worth cross-referencing to the lower parking standards being encouraged in TRA1</p>

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		<p>etc.</p> <p>Criterion 4, Part vi – Harlow Town Station, not North.</p> <p>Criterion 4, Part vii – might be worth replacing ‘and natural character’ with ‘open character’ as the airfield is a man-made feature. One concern is that this criterion might be too restrictive and may prevent some good uses which may be income-generating and would support the community stewardship side of things.</p> <p>Criterion 4, Part viii – be aware that ‘exceptional architectural quality’ could be open to interpretation without any definition. As above, remove ‘informal’ from recreation.</p> <p>Criterion 4, Part x – it might be worth including more information regarding the sensitive gap referred to here (not necessarily in the policy).</p>
5.55	64	References organic villages – this might not be the correct terminology as the new settlements will be planned, not organic.
5.61	65	Open countryside corridor between villages is in conflict with other statements about woodland buffers between villages. Ensure there is similar

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		language between supporting text and policies to avoid conflicts.
AG6	67	<p>As referenced in the introduction, this policy is where we already start to see some repetition – so if possible any areas that could be deleted because they are being addressed elsewhere is encouraged.</p> <p>Criterion 1 – Figure to be updated – currently reads ‘figure 18’. The use of community boundaries is a slightly confusing one – I think further evidence is needed to establish exactly why these areas have been selected to be inappropriate for certain types of development in order to ensure these operate both as intended and are robust enough to stand up to scrutiny through a consultation and subsequent examination. <u>Ut we should show areas outside the site ownership</u></p> <p>Criterion 3, part ii. This will need to be balanced with strategic priorities, darkness at night is fairly ambiguous likewise the reference to wild animals. It might be more pragmatic to have part i. read; <i>“Sufficient width to clearly mark separation between villages”</i> that way you can address both the separation of villages and width collectively without relying on ambiguous terms like darkness and wild animals. Deletion on part ii following this update.</p>

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		<p>Criterion 3, Part iv. – could be a good opportunity to add reference to avoiding areas of ecological value as well.</p> <p>Criterion 4 – appears to attempt to address one issue in a number of different ways creating some confusion. I wonder whether there is a necessity for this criterion at all given that the green belt, and the Stort Valley occupy the area being referred to, and thus encroachment and in fact and development is restricted anyway. Likewise, the GA1 policy has a boundary that limits the development area available for strategic purposes.</p> <p>Criterion 5, Criterion 6 and Criterion 7 all appear to broadly be repeats of policies covered above or elsewhere.</p>
5.66	71	The criteria included here needs to be adapted inline with the comments below that relate to the policy as a whole. As noted, happy to have a further discussion on this subject.
5.67	72	Typo first sentence – ‘ The use of use of wood... ’ Note on wooden construction; Traditional wood construction has benefits in terms of the primary source of material, if sourced locally and sustainably, but does not provide the necessary thermal mass required to exceed standards and therefore has to balanced

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		<p>against other sustainable construction measures, which have embodied energy reduction properties and a long life span.</p>
AG7	72	<p>This is currently a policy that, as highlighted by the QRP, needs to be amended to ensure that the strategic priorities of the District Plan can be delivered. The main issue here is that implementing a ‘Hertfordshire Village Character’ with the current criterion would fail to deliver 10,000 dwellings and the accompanying employment and infrastructure etc.</p> <p>The QRP’s note referred to exploring the principles that would define a ‘Village character’ in the 21st Century. In particular, further work on housing typology, morphology and urban form – could then be interpreted and applied in a contemporary context as a way of attaining this ‘village character’ whilst still delivering the strategic priorities.</p> <p>With that in mind, the areas of this policy which I consider are in direct conflict with this are mainly the 1st criterion, and parts i. – v. In particular part ii. which relates to ‘densities which are appropriate and characteristic of villages’. Whilst it is appreciated that GA1 is to be delivered in a series of distinct villages, the density, if in line with other Herts villages, would not allow the full delivery of GA1. Nor would the requirement to have views of fields and pockets of rural</p>

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		<p>landscape enclosed within village boundaries.</p> <p>I would recommend removing the link (part ii.) between density and village characteristics – this would also benefit you in allowing the density flexibility needed to achieve other NP goals of sustainable transport, village cores and especially buffers between the villages. E.g. allowing higher densities and building heights nearer to services reduces the need to travel by car and simultaneously allows for the efficient use of land in those areas, leaving more land for buffers etc.</p> <p>Likewise, Part iii. potentially doesn't have the flexibility needed either.</p> <p>As mentioned in the QRP – the goal of reflecting a '21st Century Hertfordshire Village Character' might be best achieved through focussing on housing typology, morphology and urban form, ideally therefore this policy, and particularly the details under criterion 1 would be replaced by further work into those areas. Thus retaining the goal, but in a slightly different way.</p> <p>This policy does remain a fairly substantial concern when it comes to the NP addressing the strategic priorities so I am happy to discuss this, and assist you when you revisit this policy to ensure that it is as robust as possible whilst still addressing your aims as an NPG.</p>

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5.76	74	Typo in second line 'to be ensure'
AG8	75	<p>Criterion 1, part i. is likely to be unachievable with reference to the existing communities as we are not allowed in planning law terms to make good existing deficits within existing communities. This also applies to paragraph 5.80. While new infrastructure can benefit existing communities, it is not a requirement to upgrade existing provision within settlements unless it is proven to be an unacceptable consequence arising from the development.</p> <p>I would consider rewording Criterion 1, Part ii. As I'm not sure it would operate in the way that you desire it to as currently written.</p> <p>Criterion 1, Part iii is not really necessary as this is written in planning legislation.</p>
AG9	77	<p>Much like the comment above relating to AG8 (1. i.), this may be a difficult policy to fully retain as it refers to the upgrading of existing infrastructure, where the impact of the GA1 development may not be unacceptable or not require mitigation.</p>
Part B: Delivering Quality Places		
LA1	80	<p>As commented on in the introduction, this policy is another area where there is some repetition and thus the potential for conflicts</p>

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		<p>and lack of clarity</p> <p>Depending upon the outcome of any re-wording to policy AG7 you may have to update Criterion 1, part i. reference to Hertfordshire village.</p> <p>Part iii. Of this criterion still refers to ‘important views and connections’ – as we noted in the previous response, for this to be truly effective it should identify those important views and connections.</p> <p>Part iv. When referring to Heritage features, is this existing or new? Presumably the SuDS and sports facilities are new, might be worth clarifying the Heritage features just to assist with clarity.</p> <p>Part ii. Presumably reference now to be updated to AG3 rather than AG2. I would suggest also that the policy is slightly reworded to say:</p> <p><i>“The landscape with the boundary of each village should incorporate existing and new landscape features, and any green spaces should be integrated into the Green infrastructure Network (see policy AG3) to maximise its continuity.”</i></p> <p>Part iii. Policy TRA4 no longer exists. Criterion</p>

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		<p>might not be needed as largely a repeat of above (could consider merging as long as clarity is still retained).</p> <p>Criterion 3; Is the second sentence missing reference to the green corridors or buffers?</p>
LA2	82	Again, this policy would appear to repeat areas covered beforehand. Typo; Criterion 1, Part i is not complete.
5.96	83	The mention of Gypsies and Travellers and Travelling Showpeople is noticeably absent from the document – this may be the best opportunity to mention alongside the other groups and needs.
BU1	85	<p>Criterion 2 – my comments on this criterion still recommend that ‘genuinely affordable’ is removed as explained in our regulation 14 response.</p> <p>Criterion 3 – I’m happy that some of the very prescriptive points of the previous draft have been deleted, however I wonder whether this criterion adds anything further than the points set out in a number of previous policies? In particular policies AG4, AG5 and AG6 add more detail on the subjects discussed, the addition of this criterion doesn’t appear to add much but could take away from the clarity in the other policies.</p> <p>Criterion 4, part ii. I wonder whether referring to ‘active frontage’ instead of just frontage better captures your desire in this policy?</p>

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		<p>Criterion 4, Part v – unfortunately this criterion as currently written, would directly prohibit the delivery of 10,000 homes and therefore conflict with the DP.</p> <p>Is Criterion 5 best placed here or in TRA1? I also wonder whether (wherever you choose to locate this criterion) reference within the policy to the Garden Town Transport Strategy might strengthen the criterion overall.</p>
5.107	86	<p>It may not be appropriate that <u>only</u> the village centres are the location for employment uses, particularly as there is a role for different types of employment uses in more rural, edge locations in order to have a variety of opportunities.</p>
BU2	87	<p>Criterion 3 – does this add anything extra than AG7 does? It might be worth just noting that a higher density is acceptable in village centres, rather than then cross-referencing to another policy.</p> <p>Criterion 4 – whilst I appreciate that the goal is again to reflect ‘Hertfordshire village character’ – as noted in the QRP it needs to be flexible to respond to contemporary issues – perhaps the deletion of the first sentence assists this, whilst still retaining the need to consider</p>

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		<p>tall buildings through the planning process and in masterplans.</p>
<p>BU3</p>	<p>89</p>	<p>Criterion 2 still conflicts with Policy ED1 – it is the terminology; ‘will generally not be supported in the Gilston Area’ that is creating problems. If this could be reworded to be more positive, whilst also reflecting the criteria below it would go some way to rectifying this conflict (maybe a criterion similar to part 3 of this policy would work better).</p> <p>As with paragraph 5.107, it is important not to be too prescriptive around the location of employment uses. There will be perfectly reasonable opportunities in non-central locations where they support a more diverse type of employment offer, such as rural crafts and agricultural jobs for example.</p> <p>Typo in Criterion 3, Part iii should be suitably designed.</p>
<p>BU4</p>	<p>90</p>	<p>My only point on this policy is whether a cross-reference to whichever policy deals with parking standards (I say whichever policy, as I recommended potentially moving the parking criterion in Policy BU1 to TRA1). A cross-reference just ensures that there is no confusion between policy BU4 which refers to parking in a place-making context, and the other parking policy which contributes to the wider strategic aim of</p>

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		encouraging sustainable transport.
H1	93	<p>Criterion 3, part ii. Again refers to key views but I cant find any that have been identified.</p> <p>Criterion 5 Have ‘model farms’ been defined somewhere?</p> <p>Criterion 6 is very vague, whilst it is similar to criterion 3, part i. which refers to improvement through an ‘appropriate layout’; this policy states that appreciation and understanding should be promoted through ‘village design and incorporation of appropriate references’. I’m not completely sure what that would mean...</p>
CI	95	On reading part iii. Of this policy it seems to only repeat what the first two parts say. I would consider whether it really does add anything additional, if it doesn’t – consider deleting.
C2	97	I believe that part ii. Of this policy is already being reviewed in light of what the QRP said and our discussion at the meeting prior to the QRP. I’m happy to continue to discuss this. There may need to be an acknowledgement that there will need to be a community in situ to maybe take on the task of representing the community in some form.
TRA1	100	Typo in criterion 1, part i. reference should be;

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		<p>‘<u>Harlow and Gilston Garden Town Transport Strategy</u>’. I wonder also whether it might be worth saying ‘...and any subsequent update to this’ just to improve the longevity of the policy should the HGGTTS change or be updated.</p>
5.145	99	<p>3rd bullet is not complete.</p>
TRA2	102	<p>Part ii. Refers to layouts being open and permeable – does this conflict with AG7’s policy criterion on narrow streets?</p> <p>Criterion 2, part iii. Refers to TRA4 which no longer exists.</p>
TRA2, TRA3 and EX1	102, 103 and 105	<p>As highlighted in my general comments – because so much ground has been covered by the previous policies it devalues what these policies are trying to achieve. In some cases these policies are nearly identical in their wording to previous policies and their criterion, in some cases they are close to, but not identical and this could create confusion. I would revisit all of the policies to see whether there are conflicts and repetition, where they are I would consider deleting the repetition or condense and focus the policy to cover only the purpose you want it to. It only needs to do it once, not multiple times.</p>
EX1	105	<p>As noted in our comments to Policy AG9 the gains for existing communities may in some cases not be necessary to make the planning</p>

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		application acceptable, and therefore the criterion is unlikely to comply with CIL Regulations.
6.6	107	Worth specifying that Policy DES1 is of the East Herts DP.