

## **Gilston Area Neighbourhood Plan (Version 1) Regulation 14 Consultation**

The Eastwick, Gilston and part of Hunsdon would like to invite you to provide your comments and feedback to the Draft Gilston Area Neighbourhood Plan (Version 1).

### **The consultation will run for the Statutory Period of 6 weeks from 14 September to 19 October inclusive.**

- **The Neighbourhood Plan area covers the entirety of Gilston Parish, Eastwick Parish and that part of Hunsdon Parish which lies within the proposed Gilston Area (Policy GA1) development outlined in the East Hertfordshire District Plan – see Fig. 1**
- **The application for designation of the Neighbourhood Area was approved by East Hertfordshire Council on 28 November 2017.**

#### **1. Why have a Neighbourhood Plan?**

- 1.1 The Green Belt designation, which restricted development in the area around Gilston and Eastwick, was removed with the East Hertfordshire District Plan adopted in October 2018, when the area was allocated for significant growth (10,000 homes, jobs and services). The development forms a part of the Gilston and Harlow Garden Town government initiative, which is expected to deliver comprehensive infrastructure upgrades in the area and regenerate Harlow, with support of government funding and substantial housing development.
- 1.2 People living in the area are concerned about the impacts of this on their communities and are determined to influence the character and quality of new development to ensure that the integrity of Hertfordshire settlements is respected and development takes place in a way that protects landscape, heritage, and the essential quality of living within the countryside. A shared aspiration is to ensure that the removal of Green Belt status from this area genuinely leads to a development of exceptional quality, that will create a set of distinctive villages each with their own individual identity set within an attractive rural landscape, while at the same time protecting and enhancing the existing settlements and delivering benefits for the existing community.
- 1.3 The preparation of a Neighbourhood Plan is a very important instrument to shape the future of the area. While it cannot change the allocation for development made in the District Plan, it can set out detailed planning policies to guide how development takes place and how the existing settlements and new villages will be shaped in future. Crucially, the Gilston Area Neighbourhood Plan (GANP or simply ‘the Plan’ hereafter) is being prepared directly by the local community, through the Hunsdon Eastwick and Gilston Neighbourhood Group which represents the Parish Councils and is made up of people living within the designated boundary. Once ‘made’ (i.e. formally adopted by East Herts Council – see Plan Preparation process below), the Gilston Area Neighbourhood Plan will have a policy status similar to that of the District Plan and provide the planning policy framework for the determination of all planning applications in the Neighbourhood Plan area: this means that developers will have to take account of its policies when putting forward development for approval.

- 1.4 The Neighbourhood Plan puts the community in the driving seat, and it is an important way for our community to influence the future of the area we call home. Other ways include:
- Commenting through formal representation to the development of the District Plan and taking an active part in the Examination in Public (EiP) – undertaken in 2017-2018
  - Participating proactively in other initiatives, such as the strategy for the A414 (Hertfordshire County Council) and the preparation of guidance documents for the Garden Town – in 2018 / ongoing
  - Providing technical responses to the major planning applications in the area – ongoing
  - Keeping up collaboration and dialogue with the local planning authorities, the developers and their technical teams so that they can understand and take account of local perspectives – also ongoing.
- 1.5 Critically, between September 2017 and January 2018, many people from the local community participated into workshops in the Village Halls to revise and develop the Concept Framework. This was followed by intense work by the Neighbourhood Plan Group (NPG) with the developers, landowners and East Hertfordshire Council in the revision of the Gilston Area Concept Framework, which was finalised by the developers and endorsed by the Council in July 2018 as a material consideration in the determination of planning applications. The Parish Councils believe that the Concept Framework (2018) sets appropriate foundations for respectful development and but they recognise that, in its present form, it does not have the status of formally adopted planning policy. The Concept Framework, was put before the Planning Inspector at the Examination in Public when the Local Plan was reviewed as evidence to support the release of the Green Belt but was not then in final form so could not be formally added into the Local Plan.
- 1.6 For this reason, the Parish Councils decided to prepare a first stage Neighbourhood Plan, which is essentially based on the vision, principles and statements agreed through the Concept Framework and elevate them to formal policy status so that, together with the District Plan, they will provide the planning policy framework for the determination of all planning applications in the Neighbourhood Plan area. This will ensure that what was agreed then will be carried through in the design and construction of the site and equally importantly the agreed early release of green space for community ownership and use.
- 1.7 The intention is to have the Neighbourhood Plan agreed and ‘made’ at a faster pace than usual, to be on time to influence the key design and infrastructure decisions for the site. For this reason, the Neighbourhood Plan is envisaged to be developed as two successive versions:
- Version 1 – essentially based on the Concept Framework, already agreed with local authorities and developers and focused on the structural characteristics of the future area and the relationship between the existing settlements and the new villages. This is based on the workshops of September 2017 and January 2018 and on subsequent discussions within the community.
  - Version 2 – incorporating Version 1, but also including more detailed policies and development guidelines for future phases of development within new and existing communities.
- 1.8 To respond to the pressing timescale of the development process, we are working to the following indicative timescale:

- 14 September to 19 October 2019 – Public and statutory consultation on this document, which is the Neighbourhood Plan (Version 1)
- December 2019 – revised draft taking account of all comments submitted to East Herts District Council
- January-February 2020 – due diligence and formal statements by East Herts District Council
- March-April 2020 – Publicity and consultation by the local authority (6 weeks)
- May-June 2020 – appointment of an Examiner, followed by an independent examination
- Summer 2020 - Final reviews, followed by a community Referendum.

1.9 It is expected that work on Version 2 will start, funding permitting, around January 2020.

## 2 **How to participate in this community consultation**

2.1 It is very important that as many people from the local community participate in the consultation by providing feedback. If you support the concept and approach of the Neighbourhood Plan (Version 1) it will be very important that you put your support in writing, and may be make further suggestions for Version 2.

2.2 The Neighbourhood Plan (Version 1) is [available to read here](#). Paper copies can be reviewed at The Plume of Feathers in Gilston, The Lion in Eastwick, St Mary's Church in Gilston, St Botolph's Church in Eastwick, Hunsdon Village Hall (meeting room - during surgery hours Monday and Friday mornings), and from Neighbourhood Plan Group members.

2.3 Your feedback can be received on or before 19 October by:

- Email letter to: [feedback@hegnp.org.uk](mailto:feedback@hegnp.org.uk),
- Post or hand delivery to: Hunsdon, Eastwick and Gilston Neighbourhood Plan Group, c/o Channoeks Farm, Gilston Nr Harlow, CM20 2RL.

2.4 During the consultation period there will be three 'drop in' sessions, where you can see the proposals and understand more about this initiative.

- September 14th - St Mary's Church, Gilston  
10am-1pm with a presentation at 11am  
Gilston Lane, Gilston, CM20 2RJ
- September 21st - Hunsdon Village Hall  
3pm-6pm with a presentation at 5pm  
45 High Street, Hunsdon, Ware, SG12 8NJ
- September 28th - St Botolph's Church, Eastwick  
10am-1pm with a presentation at 11am  
Eastwick Hall Lane, Eastwick, CM20 2QY