

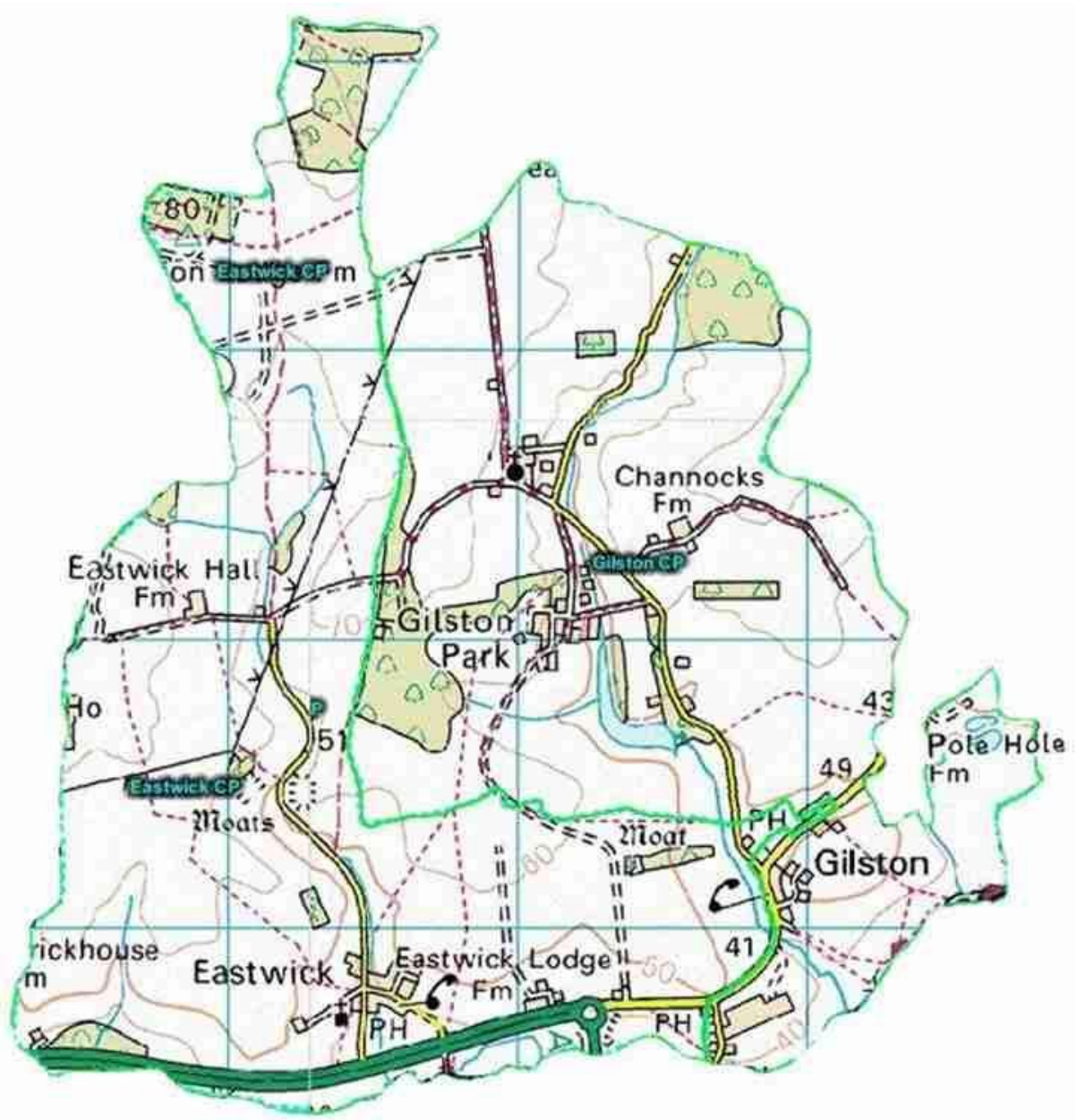
2009

Eastwick and Gilston Parish Plan

Eastwick and Gilston Parish
Plan Steering Group
December 2009

Eastwick and Gilston Parish Plan

Our parish today



Executive summary

The preparation of this Parish Plan is something which the parish has reflected on for many years as being desirable. It is of course something which is an additional task and so is something which requires a collection of individuals across the Parish to engage with. In accepting the request from the Parish Council to have a go at producing this Plan, I have been very fortunate to be supported by a Steering Group of regular and committed volunteers, without whose support and encouragement this Plan simply would not have happened. In addition to attending and contributing to meetings, there were many distributions of letters, survey forms, collections etc, all willingly done! Their names are recorded in the appendix; a big thank you to all of them.

In addition to the Steering Group we have been very grateful for the encouragement and engagement of many people who have either given advice and encouragement or participated in some way. My special thanks go to:

- **Phil Turner** and **Marion Bailey**, funded by the RTPI'S Planning Aid Foundation, who helped with our seminar.
- **Mike Fairchild**, from Little Hadham Parish Council, for his insights in preparing a plan.
- Our District Councillor, **Deborah Clark**
- **Mark Orson**, the Chairman of our Parish Council for his encouragement

We now conclude our work and look to how the community takes forward the proposed Actions; there are many exciting and interesting ways in which the whole community can engage with the area in which they live and support the evolution of our parish. This could be through engaging in the many community groups we have 'discovered', or supporting or enjoying the rural aspects of the parish and experiencing the work, say of HCC and the Land Restoration Trust in managing community owned assets in, or adjacent to, our parish.

I also hope that statutory bodies, when making decisions that will impact on this community, will also look at this report to see and understand the aspirations of the people in this parish who 'pay' for the services they provide.

Anthony Bickmore

December 2009

Introduction and background

1. Physical Description of Parish

- i. The parishes of Eastwick and Gilston sit on the southern Border of Hertfordshire County, adjacent to Essex at its interface with Harlow, a post-Second World War- generation New Town. The parish is broadly square in shape, stretching 2 miles east/west and 2 miles north/south.
- ii. In physical terms it is defined by the River Stort running along its southern boundary with its associated flood plain and marshes. Draining into this are three brooks, Golden Brook (through Pye Corner), a further one through Eastwick and one through Pole Hole, all of which run north- south from the gently undulating plateau which sits in the northern part of the parish. The geology is essentially boulder clay overlying sand and gravel deposits along the lower areas by the Stort, most of which have already been worked and subsequently filled. The landscape is defined by generally clear views of open farmland interspersed with stands of woodland. Many of the hedgerows have been lost through intensification of farming which is the dominant land use. The area is generally low- lying, with the River Stort being at around 40m above datum and the plateau areas some 85m above datum.



Landscape character, rolling countryside with views across it, in this case to Gilston Park and its historic landscape setting

- iii. The character of the landscape is, for many, dominated by the road network. Along the Stort valley is a major trunk road, the A414, an east- west dual carriageway of sub regional significance, which connects St Albans/Hertford to the west to Harlow. This dual carriage way terminates in a roundabout in the parish and non dual carriageway link south into Harlow. A 'C' class road, the C161, connects through to the east and the former A11 running north-south from Harlow to Bishop's Stortford.
- iv. The parish generally aligns itself with its 'sponsor communities' of High Wych (Post Office and primary school), Sawbridgeworth with its local services, a secondary school and shopping, and Bishop Stortford with a wider range of shopping and secondary educational facilities. Harlow, while being the nearest town, in many ways is not so closely aligned, although provides extensive car-borne shopping facilities, a hospital and a main line railway station.
- v. The parish comprises two main settlements, Eastwick, just off the A414 dual carriage way and Pye Corner (southern part of Gilston) with the busy C161 (which acts as a defacto northern bypass for Harlow) running through it in a narrow and unsuited manner. In recent years a significant community of homes has been developed at Gilston Park following the closure and conversion of a former research complex there. Across the rest of the parish are a number of outlying dwellings. There are two churches, St Mary's, Gilston, sited away from the main settlements being a 13 century church and St Botolph's, Eastwick, a 15th century church on the edge of Eastwick. The community has, through the generosity of a former landowner, a village hall in Pye Corner. There are three pubs, one in both Pye Corner and Eastwick and one fronting the C161 between the two settlements. On the southern boundary of the parish is a substantial former medical research complex which has recently closed and has yet to find a new user or use, so sits as a substantial block of vacant property behind security fences.



St Mary's, a historic Grade 1 listed church, set within the rolling open countryside with 'model' farm buildings, mainly dating from the mid 1850's around it.

- vi. The parish has a population of around 350 recorded within its electoral roll. Given the proximity of London and a main line railway station, a considerable number of residents commute to London for their work.



The A414, a road of sub regional importance, cuts through the parish but fails to provide adequate pedestrian and cyclist connections to more sustainable transport links

2. History

- i. Archaeological investigations in 2005 record the earliest evidence of human occupation to be from the late bronze age circa 600 BC. It is believed that the area would have been occupied since Neolithic times, although no direct evidence has been established from the limited survey work undertaken. The survey work revealed a number of Roman settlements, as well as traces of medieval buildings. In many ways the big and visible change was the remodelling of the area in the 19th century as a 'modern' landed estate. As part of this, the 'New Place' in Eastwick was demolished and Gilston Park, a late 1890's mansion house, was built within a landscape parkland setting, along with a number of farm complexes, two schools and workers' cottages all to a 'model farm pattern book' style of architecture. In the 1960's a number of local authority homes were built in Eastwick.
- ii. A fuller history of the parish is contained within the Parish web site www.eastwickandgilston.org.uk.

2. The Parish Plan

- i. The Parish Council asked a collection of parishioners to work on a 'Parish Plan' under its sponsorship. A core group of 6 have

met on a regular basis to steer the plan through. They have maintained full public access to their meetings through publicising their meetings minutes both in the Parish Magazine and on the parish web site. They organised a parish survey, supported by the professional advice and analysis from the University of Hertfordshire. They have organised a parish seminar with an independent and qualified facilitator from the Royal Town Planning Institute's (RTPI) Planning Aid Foundation. The project has been made possible by the donation of a considerable amount of volunteer time, as well a generous funding from a number of bodies listed in appendix 2.

- ii. In 1994 there was a similar effort to capture the views and aspirations of the parish through ten Eastwick and Gilston Group Survey (EGGS).
- iii. The Parish Plan Steering Group have dedicated themselves to be non- political and not a campaigning group; they are simply a community- minded and focussed group.
- iv. The substantive owners of the majority of the land in the parish are proposing a major commercial development of the parish to be an extension of Harlow, known as 'Harlow North'. The SteeringGroup are not an 'opposition' group; this is not the role of this group. To do so would duplicate the Stop Harlow North activities, who lead on this aspect. Any views expressed in this document regarding Harlow North are as a result of the information gathered through our community engagement and survey work, so are what the community tell us as a result of that survey work.



C161 through Pye Corner with dangerous bend – in reality a northern bypass for Harlow running through a small rural community



In contrast, residents know and use the network of 'lanes' which typify a more rural feel. There is a need to maintain these as 'calmed' rural lanes, reflecting the inherent nature of the parish that residents and visitors appreciate.

The Challenges the Parish faces

At the outset of the work on this Plan the parish was thought to face a number of 'challenges'; the list potentially included:-

- Being a dispersed community, with two centres and wider hinterland of dispersed houses, leading to a lack of much by way of communal activity/sense of community.
- Roads; the A414 is a fast dual carriageway terminating in a roundabout; it creates real dangers for residents of Eastwick who have to cross it to enter the village. The C161 through Pye Corner has a tight bend through the village. Traffic uses it as a northern bypass and so speeds through and is of a high volume not suited to a road of this size and status. The quarry at Pole Hole should have been closed many years ago but continues to obtain extensions and variations to its planning consent so attracting heavy lorries unsuited to the C161. Other heavy traffic often ignores the C161's weight restrictions which are difficult and poorly policed.
- Quarrying and poor quality of land restoration, see above.
- The parish contains no affordable housing for the offspring of residents who have to move away from the community they grew up in. There is also a lack of any 'third age' homes designed to cater for older members of the community how may find their homes larger than needed and on two levels.
- State schools at High Wych, Sawbridgeworth and Bishop's Stortford, despite being the natural focus for families, often appear to treat local children as outside the core feeder areas despite their parents contributing to HCC as charge payers.
- Postcode. The parish has a CM20 post code designation which is the Harlow post code. This affects our rights to services as we are seen to not be from Hertfordshire, as well as often delaying emergency responses provided by remote call centres that have difficulties with our proximity to the county boundary. Insurance companies assess us as having the same risk as Harlow and not rural Hertfordshire so we pay higher premiums than adjacent communities outside this postcode.
- Development pressures; The parish, being close to Harlow and some 30 miles from central London, has experienced considerable development pressures, in common with many similar communities.

The Parish Plan Survey

At the heart of our approach to making our Plan was establishing the views and interest of the whole community. A survey of all residents and businesses within the parish was key to this.

We reviewed the earlier EGGS survey work and prepared an initial series of questions and topics to be covered. We recognised that to ensure that we had a high quality survey and proper analysis of the results we ought to seek professional support. The University of Hertfordshire's statistical unit had already done some work in assisting other parishes in the construction of survey forms and analysis of questions; we therefore sought their specialist help.

We secured an excellent response rate with 2/3rds of the population returning questionnaires.

The results of the survey (published on the parishes' web site) were presented to the parish at a seminar facilitated under the guidance of a professional from the RTPI's Planning Aid Foundation. The results have also guided the direction of our Action Plan. The key themes which emerged are:-

1. **Transport**; we are a car- reliant community for our transport needs and suffer greatly from the impact of the local road network. A considerable number of residents commute to work, using Harlow station as their public transport interface, but there are almost no pedestrian or reasonable cycle links/facilities to it.
2. **Community**; the lack of sense of 'community' was strongly felt. While the parish is not large enough to support a village shop, there were suggestions that there might be more community facilities, with possibly better publication of events open to the community. The dispersed layout and design of the parish does not support high levels of community engagement; possibly Eastwick's centre could be shaped to be more of a community centre than expanse of road?
3. **Housing**; the character of the neighbourhood was a strong element in responses and the need for any new buildings or extensions to respect that was an important theme. Residents indicated a mixed aspiration for some limited new homes, but only for starter and or retirement homes for offspring/existing residents in advancing years. The Harlow North proposal was very strongly opposed by respondents.
4. **Our Local environment**; the impact of the roads across the parish was a very strong feature in responses. The community also recorded a very high level of interest in protecting the 'rural' environment – in essence it was the reason for living here; "peace and quiet" was a big feature.

The survey attracted limited responses about the nature of the services provided to the community through health, schools, refuse, policing etc.



St Botolph's, Eastwick, a listed church within the village centre

Our Action Plan

The survey work and discussions within the Plan Steering Group has evolved into a series of 'Actions' which it is felt are realistic and should be the focus for going forward.

These have been grouped into a four core themes;

Transport
Environment
Community
Housing

These themes and suggested actions have been reviewed with the Parish Council as our sponsor as well as the community through 'road show weekends', communication within the Parish Magazine and publication on the website.

There is an inevitable mismatch between many of the community's aspirations, as some are not capable of being delivered by the community itself, or by its elected Parish Council. While some fall to our District Council and others to the County Council, others require the Regional Assembly or Homes and Community Agency to take action. This may be reflected through ongoing championing of such bodies to listen to the views of our community when making decisions which affect it.

The Actions are:-

Appendix 3 records the whole range of suggested actions. The responsibly-led priority actions have been agreed with the Parish Council as follows:-

Transport

Establish with the relevant authorities up- to- date survey data on traffic movements within the parish. The aim is to be better positioned to pursue the challenges of championing for traffic calming of both the C161 through Pye Corner and the A414 dual carriageway. Both roads are poorly designed and managed, so represent dangers for the travelling public, especially for residents as daily users of them. Armed with current survey data, the Steering Committee believe that the Parish, under the leadership of the Parish Council, will more effectively be able to champion improvements. In the event that Harlow North continues to be championed then such 'base line' survey data will support the highways case and identify needs for improvements as a precondition for any new development and this should be paid for by the developers. **ACTION** led by Parish Council; responsibility resting with HCC. **SUGGESTED TIMING** – 12 months.

Develop a portfolio of ideas about how to improve the pedestrian and cycle links from Eastwick and Pye Corner to Harlow and its station. The

survey and consultation demonstrated that many within the parish believe the links to Harlow and its station are inadequate. We recognise the constraints on funding, but improvements in sustainable transport connections are seen to be important by residents as well as addressing the objectives of the Climate Change Act 2008. A portfolio of ideas should be worked up so that if funding or other opportunities become available, the Parish Council is ready to make representations and so be well placed to negotiate successful outcomes. **ACTION** Parish Council; supported hopefully by professional advice from HCC/EHDC transport professionals. **SUGGESTED TIMING** – 12 months.

Environment

Champion, and forge links with associated bodies, the opportunities to optimise the environmental qualities of the river Stort Valley flood plain as an important recreational and biodiversity asset. The survey clearly showed that residents place high importance on the environment; it is the reason they live here. Over many years the Stort valley has been identified as a unique asset worthy of enhancement, an area for landscape development and part of a much wider strategic green grid connecting Epping Forest to Hatfield Forest. A substantial parcel of land is in the ownership of the Homes and Community Agency who have confirmed to us that it is impossible to develop. Other parts of the flood plain are being used for mineral purposes and are/were former landfill sites, but are poorly restored or continuing to be used way beyond their consented lifetime for the want of a strategic and cohesive strategy. **ACTION** Parish Plan group to produce ideas and working plan for stakeholder consultation via Parish Council. **SUGGESTED TIMING** – 12 months.

Work up a local action plan to demonstrate how the conceptual Gilston Great Park idea could be manifested in the parish. The survey demonstrated the importance residents place on their local environment. Gilston Park, while noted as a historic park of interest by English Heritage and EHDC, is accorded a fairly low status reflecting the many years of decline and neglect in its management. The redevelopment of Gilston Park while producing admirable landscape assessments and survey work failed to put in place an adequate long-term plan and linked responsibility, despite what the Parish were assured to be S106 agreements. The area has escaped intensive farming, contains some very ancient trees, was remodelled in the 19th century when the mansion house was built, is a biodiversity reserve and enjoyed by many who take advantage of the rights of way network through it. **ACTION** Parish Plan group to produce ideas and working plan for stakeholder consultation via parish Council. **SUGGESTED TIMING** – 12 months.



The 'home park' to Gilston Park a designated 'historic parkland landscape with enormous landscape and biodiversity potential, reflecting its very ancient trees and landscape origins.

Community

Create some new activities within the Parish open to all residents. A theme form consultation was an aspiration for more community events.

Those who have organised events in the parish have a cynicism over the level of support, but this should not stifle further attempts, even if these start from a low- key basis. There is a need to provide information on the many local activities that already take place and which we have discovered through the survey, as well as considering new 'pilot' opportunities, even modest ones. Having a parish website will be important to achieving this, although funding constraints hamper the delivery of such a piece of community infrastructure. **ACTION** Parish Plan group to produce ideas and working plan for stakeholder consultation via parish Council. **SUGGESTED TIMING** – 12 months.

Litter pick within Parish. A small task but one which the Steering Committee felt could be an easy win. The objective would be for residents, on a volunteer basis, undertake an annual litter pick within

the 'public places' both for the direct (litter clearing) and indirect (community capacity building) objectives. **ACTION** Parish Council. **SUGGESTED TIMING** – 12 months.

Housing

Win EHDC's support for and undertaking of a 'housing needs survey'. The survey work identified slightly mixed aspirations for any new housing although seemed to accept that housing for local needs was needed and merited. There is a lack of any affordable and 'third generation' housing reflecting both the high values and Green Belt status of the majority of the parish. The first step is to undertake a more detailed assessment of demand and then consider the options from analysis of the survey outcomes; EHDC regularly conduct such surveys. **ACTION** Parish Council; via EHDC. **SUGGESTED TIMING** – 18 months.



Gilston Park, a 19th century mansion whose owners did much to set the landscape quality of the parish as it exists today

Eastwick and Gilston Parish Plan Steering Group

December 2009

Appendices

1. The Parish Plan group who made this happen are:

Anthony Bickmore
Clare Jenkins
Tim Geddes
Janine Bryant
Mark Adams
Linda Harvey

2. The sponsors who kindly gave us funding to help this happen are:

East Herts District Council
People for Places/Land Securities plc
BP Investment Management
Courtenay Builders
Burbridge 2000
Gilston Shoot
Eastwick Shoot

Eastwick and Gilston Parish Plan – Action Plan

Ref	Issues	Objective	Other stakeholders	Expected outcome	Next steps / actions	Desired date	Lead
Community cohesion & development							
C1	Compile a list of events - existing and proposed and existing events Events Table tennis	make Parish aware of activity	?	Publish list on Parish website. Produce Parish 'Welcome' pack Community building	Make contact with the Table Tennis group to see if there are opportunities	3 months	PC?
C2	Events Church feast days and highlights	Ongoing publication and use community functions?	?	community building	ongoing	3 months	PCC
C3	Events University of Third Age	Build stronger links between existing members in parish	U3A	community building	Get into Parish Magazine?	6 months	U3A - David Jackson as 'link'
C4	Events Share knowledge of activities i.e. Clay Club	Increase community access to existing activities	PCC as promoters of magazine PC as lead body?	community building	Review with editor	over next year	PC

New or restored community "events"?

C5	Events Barn dance annual / biannual?	Reinstatement of Barn dance	Friends of Eastwick	community building	reinstate	9months	FoE?
C6	Events Parish Pubs & local cafe "not for profit" meals - possibly linked to walks on path network?	Optimise existing 'facilities' in community for mutual benefit	Pubs, Eastwick Farm Shop café	community building	ask question of pubs	6 months run pilot	?
C7	Events Annual Mulled Wine pre / post Christmas	Optimise attendance/support	?	community building	Immediate	on-going	?

C8	Events Litter pick of paths/roads	Annual volunteer litter picking of designated sections of road	PC - re high vis jackets etc	community building environmental gain	PC to offer view/support then trial scheme?	12 months to run trials	PC?
C9	Safari suppers	Get community to meet in an informal way	?	Stronger community ties	Find supporters and do it - pilot in summer	Jun-09	?

Community -general

C10	Churches	Review role and function of churches in parish as heavily listed 'community' infrastructure being poorly used.	PCC	Greater local engagement with community	Review PCC's current aspirations	Nov-09	Priest in charge, FoE, FoG
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C11	Parish website	keep the community informed of what is happening / when	PC	Stronger community ties	develop website to include list of events by month, listing at least 1 month ahead	Jun-09	PC
C12	Community - transport scheme	support for elderly / those without transport		Stronger community ties	identify whether there is a need, compile list of volunteers and 'customers'	Jun-09	Parish Plan team? PC
C13	Community - Register of skills & interests, including a directory of local commerce	Promote local enterprise		Stronger community ties	Parish Magazine article to see if we get any submissions		PPC
C14	Parish Year Book	New publication - 'Welcome' pack		New residents made aware of what the community can offer	Compile list of all events & 'services' in conjunction with web site	Nov-09	PPC

Ref	Issues	Objective	Other stakeholders	Expected outcome	Next steps / actions	Desired date	Lead
Environment							
E1	Strategic environment development Stort Valley link to parish as area of wildlife and landscape quality	Support long term objectives of Gibberd plan and 'Green grid' so providing better environment and wildlife opportunities for Parish while respecting its flood plain character and function	Stort Valley partnership? Harlow DC Countryside management service Land Restoration Trust? Harlow sculpture Trust? Herts and Middlesex Wildlife trust	Environmental gain	Research existing work and policy, link to Land Restoration Trust, explore purchase of field in Eastwick? Become 'community members of Wildlife trusts – link to community theme above – host walks and talks	12 months	PPC PC
E2	Environment - Village design statements	Produce Village Design Statement	EHDC	Decision on whether to opt for production of such a statement	What are they and will they help define what the nature of the built environment in core settlements should be like. Research via EHDC Planning dept and ACRE, agree and publish VDS for submission to EHDC LDF. Establish what support, if any, should be given to the Gilston Great Park initiative by Stop Harlow North	2 years	PC?
E4	Environment - Parish paths	Support small scale improvements/clearances or similar	PC Rural Action, Countryside Management Service	Environmental gain	Find say 5 small 'environmental projects which could deliver gains and be self contained and capable off attracting funding via PPP	6 months	PC and PPC

E5	Environment - flood plain between Harlow and Gilston. Could this be developed into an 'informal wildlife/ biodiversity park'?	Transfer responsibility for the flood plain from HCA to Land Restoration Trust. Improve / develop as a 'formal park'	HCC Wildlife Trusts Harlow DC Environment Agency	Meet bio diversity targets without compromising flood plain function	Work up and champion idea Make contact with Wildlife trusts (both Herts and Essex)	1 year	?
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Ref	Issues	Objective	Other stakeholders	Expected outcome	Next steps / actions	Desired date	Lead
E6	Environment - Historic landscapes	Retain and recognise the historic setting of Gilston House, its home wood and landscape setting as described when the residential planning consent and S52 agreement were negotiated	EHDC -planning Dept Residents Associations Original developers and S52 counterparties English Heritage Wildlife trusts	Landscape improved as anticipated in planning application	Assess impact to residents Register as historic landscape Review S52 obligations	Nov-09	EHDC - landscape team?
E7	Environment - Archaeological interest	Preserve and protect the considerable archaeological interest in the parish	EHDC Local History Societies English Heritage	Increased public awareness and access Avoiding damage to heritage	Review Eastwick Manor site management - who is paying? Seek copy of archaeology survey of parish	Nov-09	? DC EHDC's planning team?
E8	Environment - Churchyards	see C10	PCC Local conservation bodies? Friend of churches	Management plans for preserving parish 'graveyards' as ecological zones of importance	Discussion with PCC approach to management and PC on ongoing funding of church yard maintenance	Nov-09	PCC?
E9	Environment - Woodland management	Identify opportunities to increase biodiversity and improve visual amenity	Landowners English Nature Forestry Commission Wildlife trusts	Improvements to bio diversity Improvements to Visual amenity	The parish contains a number of 'amenity woodland areas' which are generally characterised by neglect. Identify areas for improvement. Establish whether Land owners / lessees interested in supporting improvement	?	?
E10	Environment - local wildlife	Preserve and protect the considerable diverse wildlife in the parish	Landowners Government funding of farmers	Improvements to bio diversity Improvements to Visual amenity	get access to the surveys conducted over last 5 years (bats, etc)	6 months	PP C

E11	Environment - Land development (planting proposals) near A414	Maintain & improve bio-diversity	HCC & landowners	Replanting of plantation about to happen	Follow up and monitor H's planned works	6 months	PC
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Ref	Issues	Objective	Other stakeholders	Expected outcome	Next steps / actions	Desired date	Lead
Housing							
H1	Housing Housing needs survey	Establish whether there is a need and appetite for new housing to serve existing community	EHDC Local Housing Associations	Report on 'housing needs'	contact EHDC for information, analyse data from G&E Survey, review housing policies with EHDC	12 months	PC?
H2	Housing Associations working in area	Establish who are the local associations who have a track record in rural housing	EHDC	Better information on how rural housing for community needs is managed	Via EHDC	6 months	PC?
Traffic & Transport							
HW1	Highways survey data	Establish what the latest data is	HCC	Review of data and capacity issues	Contact HCC	6 months	PC
HW2	Highways - Sustainable transport links to station	Develop a portfolio of ideas to improve safety and quality of pedestrian and cycle routes to station and interchange at station	EHDC HCC Network Rail Sustrans Harlow DC	Portfolio of good ideas for improvements which can be lobbied for	1 establish if we can get professional support 2 develop ideas	12 months	PC?
HW3	Highways - public transport	Establish whether there is a need for improved public transport	Bus operators	Reduced carbon footprint and greater accessibility	review Survey results		PPC
HW4	Highways - speed limits	improve adherence to speed limits through the villages	HCC	improve adherence to speed limits through the villages	contact HCC / police	12 months	PC

Glossary

PC	Parish Council
VHMC	Village Hall Management Committee
PCC	Parochial Church Council
PPC	Eastwick and Gilston Parish Plan Committee
FoE	Friends of Eastwick Church
FoG	Friends of Gilston Church
EH_LDF	East Herts Local Development Framework
EHDC	East Herts District Council
HCC	Hertfordshire County Council