

community to come together to shape development in their area. Although it is envisaged that neighbourhood planning will be led by Town and Parish Councils, the Government has also stated that businesses will have a leading role. The involvement of a range of local stakeholders will also help strengthen community support. In areas without Town or Parish Councils, residents can come together to form neighbourhood forums to undertake neighbourhood plans.

Because neighbourhood plans will form part of the statutory Development Plan, when preparing a neighbourhood plan certain procedures as set out in the Statutory Regulations must be followed:

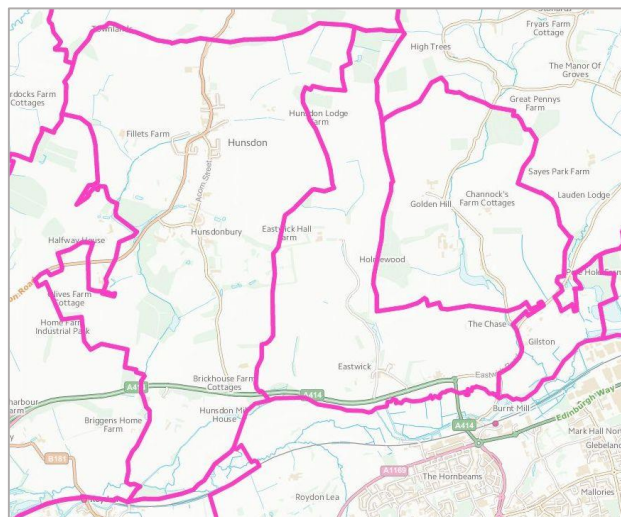
- Conformity with the East Herts District Plan
- Conformity with the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)
- Be based on evidence from technical studies
- Be subject to sustainability appraisal / strategic environmental assessments (SA/SEA)

### Why are the two Parish Councils working together?

For two very distinct reasons:

1. For the community to produce a valid Neighbourhood Plan (ie one which has been independently verified as meeting all the statutory requirements) will require a major commitment of time and effort. Much of this will be made by volunteers from within the communities - including those already engaged on Parish Councils; the rest will require professional (paid) input by relevant specialists. By joining together the communities hope to achieve some benefits of scale, utilises a wider pool of local expertise and avoid unnecessary and costly duplication.
2. As the map (right) confirms, we are three parishes - albeit two Parish Councils - that are geographically very closely connected. As such we have many shared interests and are part of the same District Council ward. Perhaps most importantly, however, is that much of the land within the three parishes has been identified within East Herts' emerging District Plan as a Broad Areas for Development

and is under single ownership by a housing development company. Large-scale development in this area over the timescale of the District Plan (to 2031) is therefore a very real prospect and one of the explicit purposes of the HEGNP will be to inject a local view as East Herts Council continues to analyse and assess the prospect of development in the Gilston Area alongside its other options



### When will the HEGNP be produced?

That's a difficult question to give a clear answer to. All the team know at this stage is that there is a great deal of work to do, that we haven't identified who is going to do much of that work, and that - even when the work is done - there are several external hurdles to be overcome, such as conducting a community-wide referendum on the final Plan. Based on the experience of other communities going through the same process, our best guess would be that the initial Plan should be in place by mid-2017. However the Plan will be a living document that needs to evolve and keep pace with external factors - most importantly the East Herts District Plan and any subsequent supplementary studies that will impact on the Hunsdon, Eastwick & Gilston parishes.

One other fact the team does know is that the greater the involvement and commitment of the communities, the faster

progress will be made and the quicker the Plan can be put in place to ensure local views and priorities are given proper weight when planning decisions are made in future.

### How will the HEGNP affect you as a resident, business or landowner?

The HEGNP will be a supplement to East Herts Council's District Plan. The District Plan is the planning document that "will deliver sustainable development and shape the future of East Herts to 2031". At the time of writing (in February 2016) that is well advanced but remains to be ratified and become fully effective. However, as the District Plan emerges, more and more weight is attached to it (and therefore to its supplements) when the Council makes its decisions on applications for developments.

When the District Plan is in place, it will be the single and definitive basis against which all applications are decided. That includes both strategic policies - ie the 'top-down' assessment of where the additional 15,000 homes that East Herts has been determined to require by 2031 should broadly go - and the detailed policies that would apply to a specific development.

So if you live, work or own land in Hunsdon, Eastwick or Gilston and have a view on where development should go or not go, or you have a view on what types of development should be permitted or what should not, or you have a view on what developments should look like or should not - then this is your opportunity to express those views. Because, in time, those decisions will affect you.

### Where will the HEGNP apply?

When the two Parish Councils agreed to work jointly on a Neighbourhood Plan they recognised that each of the communities would have views on their particular locality. But Hunsdon residents are unlikely to be closely familiar with local issues and priorities in Eastwick & Gilston, and vice versa. Consequently the Steering Group's intention is that the Plan should have sections specific to each of the current settlements. The content of these sections is more likely to address the detailed policies that will apply immediately to

individual applications.

The greater challenge will, without doubt, be to address the countryside outside of and between the villages. This is land which is currently designated by East Herts Council in its Local Plan (2007) as Green Belt or as Rural Area Beyond the Green Belt. As such there are planning restrictions which apply and generally prohibit development for housing. However the emerging District Plan, which will soon replace the Local Plan, identifies 'the Gilston Area' as a Broad Area For Development with the potential to accommodate around 3,500 new homes in the period up to 2031.

The primary reason for this designation is that the District Plan must identify, at least in broad detail, how the Local Planning Authority intends to accommodate the full number of new homes which studies suggest will be required in the district over the plan period. Gilston, and the other two Broad Areas for Development, are currently in the (draft) District Plan to 'mop up' the gap between the housing allocations to existing towns and villages which total 11,500 and the overall requirement of 15,000. Each of the Broad Areas for Development is identified in the District Plan, not because it has been assessed as being suitable for development but rather because no insuperable barrier has been identified which would preclude its inclusion as a means to accommodate to the residual new homes.

The plan acknowledges that insufficient work has been undertaken to determine whether an allocation should be made, and describes how each of the Broad Areas for Development would be the subject of more detailed study and analysis. This would look in particular at the ability to provide all necessary infrastructure in parallel with new housing and in, the particular case of Gilston, of the implications of the current Green Belt designation which would preclude any development. The situation is therefore very uncertain, and it is the view of the Parish Councils and of the HEGNP Steering Group that during this process of further study by East Herts Council, a local view must be injected via the HEGNP

### **Who is developing the HEGNP?**

Hunsdon Parish Council and Eastwick & Gilston Parish

Council have committed to work together to produce a joint Neighbourhood Plan. To that effect they have formed a Steering Group comprising some members of each Parish Council with other residents of the parishes to manage the project. The Steering Group will undertake some of the work itself, but its main purpose is to enable the Plan by engaging volunteers and professionals in the various stages, and in particular to generate and gather the detailed information upon which the Plan must be based.

This Steering Group was formed in late 2015 and is still formulating its overall approach and starting to make detailed arrangements. The Steering Group comprises:

**Anthony Bickmore (Gilston resident - Chairman)**  
**Bernadette Dunthorne (Hunsdon Parish Councillor)**  
**Tim Geddes (Eastwick & Gilston Parish Councillor)**  
**Mike Newman (Hunsdon resident)**  
**Mark Orson (Eastwick & Gilston Parish Councillor)**  
**Bob Toll (Hunsdon Parish Councillor)**

All the above are familiar faces within their communities and would be happy to answer any questions you may have on the emerging HEGNP and/or to hear your suggestions. They would be even happier to hear your offers of support and willingness to contribute! Any of the team can be contacted by email at [info@HEGNP.org.uk](mailto:info@HEGNP.org.uk)



This leaflet has been produced by the Parish Councils of Hunsdon and Eastwick & Gilston working jointly as the Hunsdon, Eastwick & Gilston Neighbourhood Planning Team ©2016.

[www.HEGNP.org.uk](http://www.HEGNP.org.uk)

## **The Hunsdon, Eastwick & Gilston Neighbourhood Plan**

The Parish Councils of Hunsdon and Eastwick & Gilston have committed to working together to produce a Neighbourhood Plan - the Hunsdon, Eastwick & Gilston Neighbourhood Plan (HEGNP).

This leaflet describes:

**What is Neighbourhood Planning?**

**Why are the two Parish Councils working together?**

**When is the HEGNP going to be produced?**

**How does this affect you as a resident, business or landowner?**

**Where will the HEGNP apply?**

**Who is developing the HEGNP?**

We hope you will find it informative and helpful. More importantly we hope it will inspire YOU to become involved. If you are willing to offer assistance, of any kind, to the HEGNP team or have any feedback on this leaflet then please contact us using our electronic response form on the website [www.HEGNP.org.uk](http://www.HEGNP.org.uk) or by email at [info@HEGNP.org.uk](mailto:info@HEGNP.org.uk) or using the enclosed paper response form, which can be returned to any of the collecting points shown.

### **What is Neighbourhood Planning?**

Neighbourhood planning is the name of a new tier of statutory planning functions that sits below and complements the statutory planning services provided by East Herts Council as the local planning authority (LPA). However, unlike district-wide planning, neighbourhood planning is not compulsory and where neighbourhood planning is not undertaken the East Herts District Plan will be the sole planning guidance.

Introduced as part of the Government's Localism Agenda, neighbourhood planning is an opportunity for the whole