

Hunsdon, Eastwick and Gilston Neighbourhood Plan Group

Notes of issues covered in conversation with Allies and Morrison's Mark Leitner-Murphy Thursday 17th August

Overview

I had a useful conversation covering a wide range of issues, I felt that Mark understood and, in some cases, endorsed the points I put to him on behalf of the Group.

NOTE – I made it clear to him that in my professional life I have a number of wider slightly associated interests which I did not see as conflicting with the views put forward and asked that he make a note of these potential “conflicts”.

Summary of topics covered

1 GENERAL

- Harlow – the original view (Gibberd's?) of a complete town with its own industry has changed to become quite a commuter base for London and Cambridge corridor. This reflects the location of the railway station on the town's edge. To me the earlier suggestions of Harlow North as completing the circle are illogical as any such town would have the northern part divided from the rest by the flood plain, railway and industrial areas – thankfully this idea has been abandoned by the Gilston site owners .
- Chris Blandford work – I expressed my confusion as to why East Herts (Leader/Councillor/CEO/Planners at last Stakeholder meeting) are not aware of this work as it is directly relevant to their proposals and has some key strategic thinking relevant to the Vision work and so Stort corridor.
- Gilston Proposal – I reminded him of our objection to the proposal but willingness to work with people as EH have overturned 60 years of policy to respond to the landowners proposals as a way of delivering housing in the Green Belt.

2 INFRASTRUCTURE:-

- It is failing now and cannot accept additional loading from this project – infrastructure needs to lead if the proposed development is allowed – that should be a part of the Vision
- **Rail** - Harlow Mill station seems like a forgotten asset within a very costly piece of infrastructure (London Cambridge railway line)
- Bus and rail interchange is poorly designed and not maintained – any vision for expansion must address this failing by Harlow?
- **Roads** the C161 is a defacto North Harlow bypass that is unacceptable. Plans put forward for Gilston fail to show the

second Stort Crossing or how the road will join the A414 dual carriageway at Eastwick to M11 – the Vision needs to address this issue more fully

- **Water** – our supplier writes to us saying there is a strategic shortage of water, we understand this but not how an additional 10,000 new homes can be added to the system if there is a water shortage as we are told.
- **Sewage** – ditto
- **Health** PAH is not working well and appears to not optimise its site – adding more customers requires these deficits to be addressed – locating it in a village outside Harlow seems illogical and bad planning and that should be made clear in any vision? We have expressed this view but would like it confirmed whether this is seen as a solution or agreed that it is outside the scope of Gilston, as proposed.
- **Schools** – there is a shortage of places now, if the developer is to add 10,000 new homes then they must fund the new schools in advance not add to the current problems.
- **Social Care** – need to think carefully about where in Villages this is planned – it needs to be a part of the vision
- **Social housing provision** – this has been made but local families find it hard to access it, as I understand the position.
- **Green and Blue** – Cross linked to Blandford work alongside:-
 - Harlow's cycle ways are declining and have development backing onto them, rather than facing them, possibly why they have become neglected – Harlow needs to remedy within its Vision?
 - Green wedges in Harlow have feel of 'left over space' some of which could be used to provide the housing Harlow seeks as well as funds to make the green spaces work harder? Harlow are supporting removing the Green Belt while having low intensity green space close to the Station which could take some housing Harlow seeks; what is the vision for all of this?

3 GILSTON CONCEPT – Strategic issues

- Assurances have been given by EH (esp Leader) and P4P that the concept is 'villages' in landscape setting NOT Harlow North BUT in CFD they have jointly prepared shows a different thing – more akin to urban extensions. We talked about villages needing to have separation, soft (les dense) edges and a village centre. The Listed heritage has been poorly thought about (1000 year old Grade 1 Listed church's and the Gilston Park (as a historic garden landscape) not properly included within the Concept). Design shows a boulevard more like the Mall in London's St James Park than a Hertfordshire village – the Vision needs rethinking!

- Land Value capture – this is talked about as a key component of the Concept but we are not told what it means BUT is being used to secure the removal of the Green Belt for development, we continue to ask but are not given any responses; we should have a right to know what it means – there is either no discussion or the conversations are being denied or done in secret without the needed expertise to support it. The developers have made it a part of their Vision – we agree and want to know more – it should be settled well before the EiP, we and the Developers Solicitors agree that is a reasonable approach....but nothing happens!
- Governance for delivery; the project is very complex and requires specialist inputs so is not the normal stuff for East Herts – we have suggested, in response to a request for us as a Group, our idea for an alternative approach, but have not had a formal reply from East Herts after 8 months. The evidence in our community is that East Herts have sub optimally managed the major planning decisions against the advice/comments from the parish councils they had but seem unwilling to revise their approach; the Terlings development in Pye Corner is just the latest example and has fundamental flaws which EH were advised of and failed to play any attention to – that must not be allowed to happen again.
- Community ownership of community assets – P4P have told us that some, yet to be identified vehicle, will be set up on completion of the projectin 35 years time! This is a nonsense, if assets are not to be developed then they should go in the day after the EiP's outcome (assuming it accepts the EH proposal) AND should not be passed to East Herts as they have overturned their 60 year policy on Green Belt so cannot be the right people to manage such assets the local community should manage them. Again East Herts and P4P have not set out in writing what will happen this is a part of the Vision they offer and needs addressing.

4 GILSTON development form:-

- If it is to be 7 villages then lets have 7 villages meaning realistic separation and villages with individual character.
- The village vision should not show a uniform approach to density, the edges will be lower density and the centres need to have character
- The centres need to have functions and so a reason the be 'centres' - this needs to be talked about
- A414 corridor and proposed link to M11 has not been detailed – it runs through the existing community and has a complex crossing into Harlow but none of that has been explained as a Vision and the plans do not show any detail – it is a massive issue

- How will the villages connect to each other and Harlow's infrastructure and what will be the sustainable transport – guided bus, cycle, walking there is yet to be a coherent vision?
- The scheme is planned around the developers ownership, not the principals of good planning, so they have sought Green Belt removal for areas they propose not to build on (why, they have not included land outside of their ownership – it feels like East Herts have accepted whatever they have been asked for) – the scheme should be based on East Herts view of what a sound master plan should be not the proposers best fit to their land holdings – we have yet to see that.
- Some of the development images are not 'village' forms of development – the plans display little understanding of what a village is – even the architects working for the developer agreed this at a seminar with us on this.
- There is no plan for the landscape to the south, the Stort corridor – why not?
- Harlow Town Station will be a major gateway but at the moment is a poor quality space and poorly managed it needs a fresh vision for its future – it cannot be acceptable not to have a better Vision for this major gateway?
- Harlow's town centre is in decline, retail parks have been allowed without the right traffic infrastructure and that has helped to destroy the High – a new vision for that needs to be created.
- What is the Vision for the desolate area of Harlow's EZ, is that where the new hospital will go?

5 NEXT STEPS:-

- I welcomed the consultation on behalf of the Group. From the Vision there should be a proper public consultation and discussion of what the Master plan should be; this has not happened.
- The delivery mechanisms need review, both to recognise the wider project covering Harlow alongside the East Herts and 'Gilston' part
- The community, despite its distaste for the concept, has made serious inputs to the process But nothing has changed and we get no feedback
- A & M agreed to send us details of future consultations and expected to get back to us in October 2017.

NOTE – I have done a this note as some of the points above might usefully go into our CDF response, alongside briefing to our Urban design consultants, as well as making sure that, as a Group. we are aligned in our thinking, alongside the adjacent Parishes.

Anthony Bickmore
18th August