

EAST HERTS COUNCIL HOUSING STRATEGY 2021 TO 2026 CONSULTATION

Comments from Hunsdon Parish Council

Theme 1 Needs –

The Parish Council recognises that this paper is more of a social strategy plan and priorities than a housing one. There is no reference to any of the new housing numbers within East Herts which the District Plan intends to use to resolve housing shortages. It has policies on affordable housing and if the numbers come to completion there will be thousands of affordable houses made available.

As one of the priorities in the paper states, EHC needs to “research the need for smaller affordable homes in rural areas to assess need among younger people/first time buyers.”

However, what is so-called ‘affordable’ in East Herts is well beyond many people’s ability to pay. As well as the need, EHC should assess the gap between what EH ‘affordable housing’ means in economic terms in relation to what people can pay - and how alternative tenures can be structured to do that, which will involve public funds.

Based on evidence of our own Household Survey which was carried out to provide data and opinions for our Neighbourhood Plan, we have put together a Hunsdon Housing Policy in the draft Neighbourhood Plan. In Hunsdon we have focused on housing for first time buyers and residents. The one area where development, by infill, will be permitted is affordable housing for local people, in accordance with the perceived housing needs locally.

Places for People, the principal landowners and developers of the Gilston Area, commissioned a Housing Needs Survey covering the local villages and settlements including Hunsdon. The Housing Needs Survey for Hunsdon (attached) draws the following conclusions: -

Hunsdon is characterised by a higher proportion of retired households and those suffering from a life limiting health problem, indicating there could be a latent demand for downsizing and for homes that offer aged care or support options and other adaptations to support living for those with health problems.

Hunsdon residents who did identify a need or want to move to a new home were far more likely than those in the wider Gilston Area to do so because they require greater support or care in their homes or because they require a suitably adapted home. They were also more likely to want or need to move because of the availability of transport (6% vs 2%) and infrastructure and amenities (12% vs 7%).

The Parish Council will be looking towards the Gilston Area developments not only to meet the demand created by developing families but the needs of those with specialist requirements for housing as identified in the Housing Needs Survey.

Hunsdon has a large proportion of council owned properties, but the PC suggests that before social tenants are placed in Hunsdon, the suitability of the village to meet their particular needs is reviewed. There is no public transport to the nearest large town, Harlow, the school is over-subscribed and we depend on medical support from Much Hadham.

The PC agrees that the most vulnerable are a priority, but EHC seem to have overlooked the growing need to accommodate immigrants from North Africa and now Afghanistan who have been granted asylum. We assume EHC will be asked to share this responsibility.

Theme 4 Creating Communities – The Gilston Area represents a significant contribution to the potential social and affordable housing provision in East Herts over the next 15 years and beyond. The strategy should take into account the findings of the Housing Needs Survey carried out on behalf of Places for People, the owners and developers of the Gilston Park Area (attached for information). The strategy therefore needs to recognise that developing families in the local villages will look to the Gilston Area as a suitable place to live to be close to family and friends and their places of employment. Conflict with other housing priorities will probably arise.

Detailed master planning of the Gilston Villages will probably be getting underway early next year and the strategy needs to be shaped in the light of the survey.