

HGGT

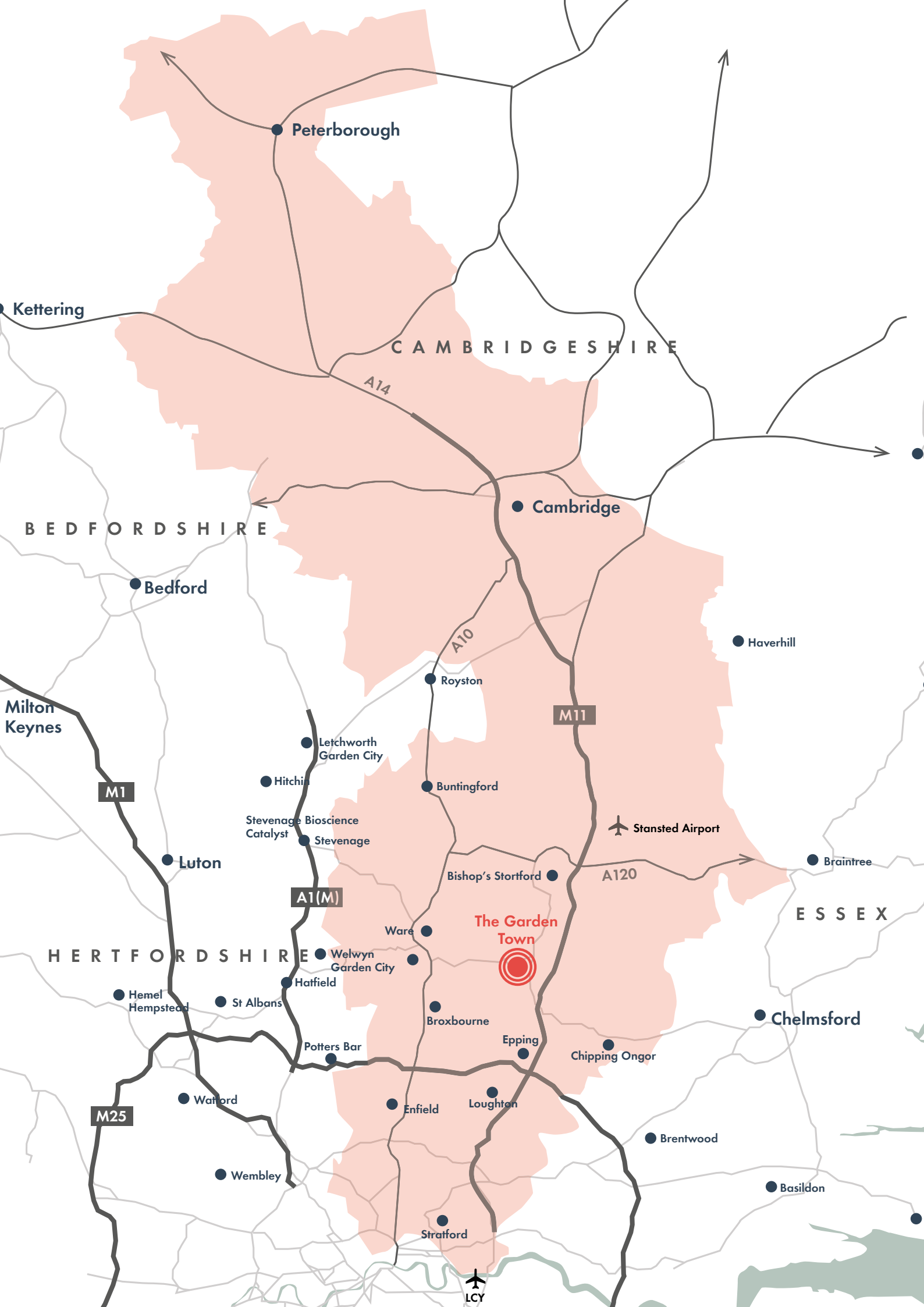
HARLOW & GILSTON
GARDEN TOWN

Harlow and Gilston Garden Town

ANNUAL REVIEW

April 2025 - March 2026





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Chair's Foreword



Councillor Dan Swords

Chair of the HGGT Joint
Committee

Leader of Harlow Council

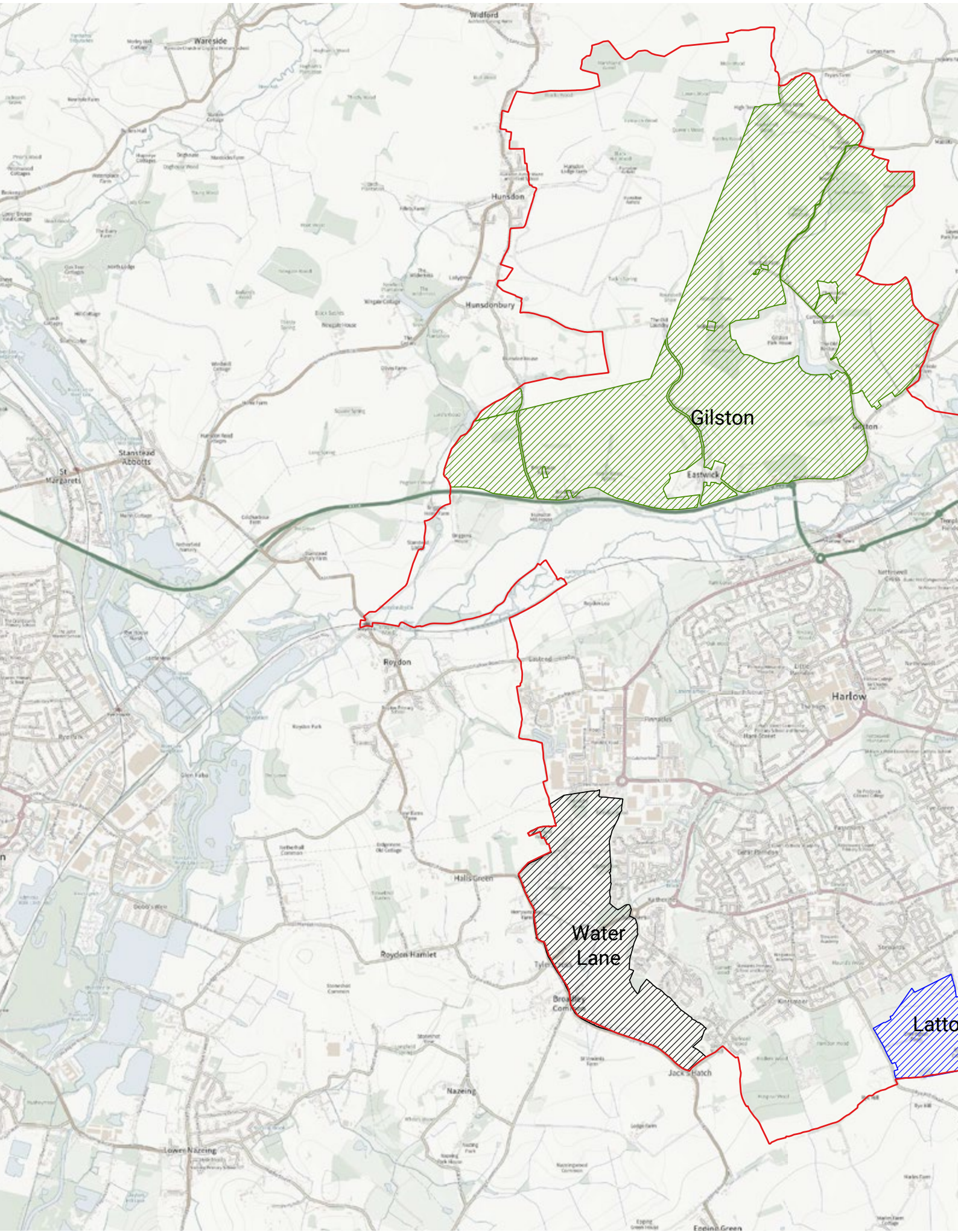
I'm pleased to share the report of activity across Harlow and Gilston Garden Town in the last year. I hope you enjoy reading about progress and the activities of our partners and key stakeholders.

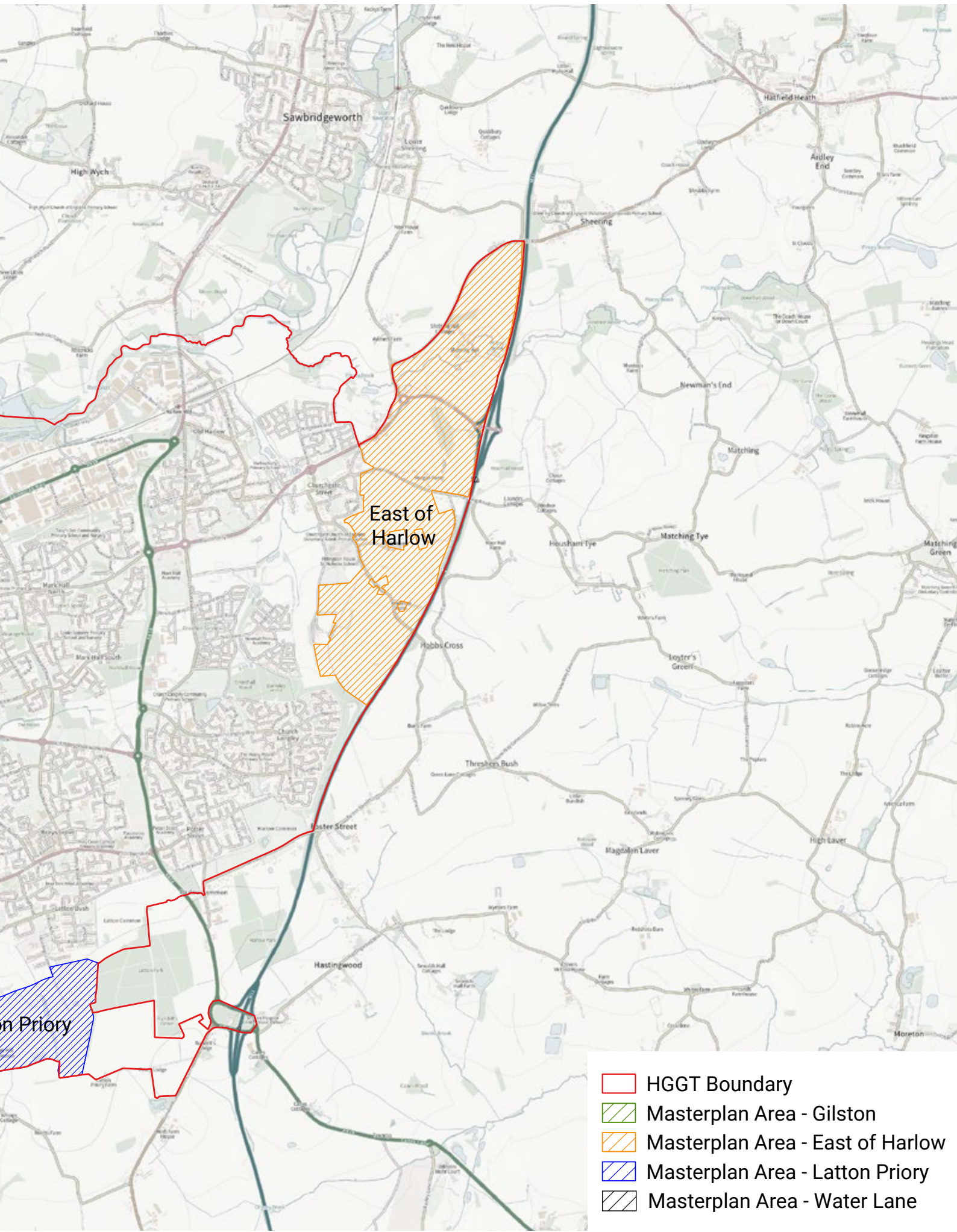
A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Dan Swords".



HGGT

HARLOW & GILSTON
GARDEN TOWN





-  HGTT Boundary
-  Masterplan Area - Gilston
-  Masterplan Area - East of Harlow
-  Masterplan Area - Latton Priory
-  Masterplan Area - Water Lane

About Harlow and Gilston Garden Town

East Hertfordshire District Council (EHDC), Epping Forest District Council (EFDC), Essex County Council (ECC), Harlow District Council (HDC) and Hertfordshire County Council (HCC) are working together to bring forward transformational growth in and around Harlow through the promotion of the Harlow and Gilston Garden Town (HGGT) as designated by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government” (MHCLG) in January 2017.

HGGT is one of the most exciting regeneration opportunities for sustainable development of any place in the UK and is the second largest growth initiative in the South-East region. The adopted HGGTVision identifies four new Garden Neighbourhoods in and around Harlow, supporting the building of 16,000 homes to be delivered by 2033 and 7,000 in the years that follow. Through thoughtful planning and meaningful community engagement, HGGT will deliver a transformative and positive physical legacy that puts people first:

“The pioneering New Town of Gibberd and Kao will grow into a Garden Town of enterprise, health and sculpture at the heart of the UK Innovation Corridor. Harlow and Gilston will be a joyful place to live with sociable streets and green spaces; high quality homes connected to fibre optic broadband; local centres accessible by walking and cycling; and innovative, affordable public transport. It will set the agenda for sustainable living. It will be adaptable, healthy, sustainable, innovative.”

HGGT in Numbers

5 Council partnership forming the HGGT Joint Committee



4 New Strategic Development Sites



Regenerated Town Centre



Up to 23,000 new Garden Town homes



Up to 1,000 new jobs a year over the next two decades

£ 182MILLION Housing Infrastructure Grant from Government



660 HECTARES of green space in the Gilston area



2038 UKHSA fully operational in Harlow

Governance

HGGT Joint Committee

Three public meetings of the HGGT Joint Committee were held at Harlow Council's Civic Chamber over the last 12 months with Cllr Dan Swords re-elected as Chair on 29 July 2025.

8 December 2025 saw Cllr Vicky Glover-Ward elected as Vice-Chair.

HGGT Joint Committee Members:

- Cllr Dan Swords – Harlow Council (Chair)
- Cllr Vicky Glover-Ward – East Herts Council (Vice-Chair)
- Cllr Ken Williamson – Epping Forest District Council
- Cllr Lesley Wagland – Essex County Council
- Cllr Paul Zukowskyj – Hertfordshire County Council

Paula Hirst was appointed as the new Director for Harlow and Gilston Garden Town in September 2025. Paula joined HGGT with extensive leadership experience in large scale sustainable urban development and regeneration within the UK and overseas.

Civic Centre



Ginnham
Civic Centre



Placemaking and Homes





Water Lane

The promoters comprising Manor Oak Homes, Martin Grant Homes, Persimmon Homes and Taylor Wimpey started work to prepare a Strategic Masterplan Framework (SMF) for the site. The SMF will set out the key design principles and guide future planning application proposals.

Initial promoter-led engagement sessions took place with members from Harlow Council and Epping Forest District Council as well as Roydon and Nazeing parish councils between July and October 2025.

A desktop review of potential Sustainable Transport Corridor Connector routes into the site has also been undertaken to provide greater certainty for developers on the deliverability of alternatives.

From Harold's Grove to Jack's Hatch and incorporating areas of Tylers Cross and Broadley Common, the site allocation within EFDC's Local Plan envisages approximately 2,100 new homes and associated infrastructure to the west of Harlow.

Gilston Area

Granted planning permission by East Herts Council in January 2025 and one of the biggest developments in the country, a Court of Appeal ruling in November last year formally ended the legal challenge to the Gilston Area's outline planning permissions, unlocking the next stage of delivery for this major part of the Garden Town.

Throughout the legal proceedings, the landowners and developers in the Gilston Area maintained progress by undertaking significant masterplanning work with East Herts Council and the community.

The Strategic Landscape Masterplan that sets the design framework for the delivery of 660 hectares of green space for recreation and biodiversity was submitted and approved by East Herts Council.

The masterplan for Village 7 has been submitted and approved and the Village 1 masterplan was also submitted and will shortly be approved by East Herts Council.

Masterplans for Villages 5 and 6 have also progressed significantly with community working groups and public exhibitions and will be submitted to East Herts Council in August 2026.

These two masterplans unlock the detailed design of the Sustainable Transport Corridor that will connect Village 7 to Village 1 and beyond into Harlow.

Many technical conditions have been discharged, and work has commenced on the delivery of the Central Stort Crossing, the first strategic transport infrastructure to connect the Gilston Area to the North to Centre Sustainable Transport Corridor completed by Essex County Council earlier this year.

Design work has progressed on the first community infrastructure with Hertfordshire County Council working with the developers and East Herts planners to integrate the first primary school into the heart of Village 1.

Latton Priory

An outline planning permission for the proposed Garden Town development at Latton Priory was refused by Epping Forest District Council in February 2026.

Submitted by CEG and Hallam Land in September 2024, the recommendation for refusal was based on several Epping Forest and HGGT policy areas where the proposal fell short.

This included insufficient affordable housing and highway impacts as well as mitigation requirements not meeting Garden Town principles.



East of Harlow

Anderson Group have started construction on 38 homes that will sit within the proposed East of Harlow development of the Garden Town, adjacent to Moor Hall Lane.

Both Epping Forest District Council and Harlow Council continued to liaise with agents and landowners with the aim of agreeing a site-wide strategic masterplan for the proposed 3,350 homes development.

Princess Alexandra Hospital continued discussions with landowners regarding new site acquisition close to Junction 7a of the M11.



Sustainable Movement



2



First Phase of HGGT Infrastructure Completed



Harlow and Gilston Garden Town's first piece of transport infrastructure is complete with upgraded walking and cycling routes alongside new bus lanes.

Delivered as part of Homes England's £182 million investment into the Garden Town development, the route enhances active and sustainable travel between Harlow's Burnt Mill roundabout and the Town Centre.

The improvements include:

- 5.5m separated walking and cycling pathways
- New lighting
- New bus lanes and shelters (with real-time info screens on the way)
- Redesigned Burnt Mill roundabout
- New signalised crossings
- More access points into Harlow Town Centre

The upgrades give residents and visitors safer, greener and healthier ways to travel locally, supporting the wider vision for a well connected, sustainable Garden Town.

The second phase of construction will begin in the spring/summer of 2026 with Eastwick Roundabout converting to a traffic signal-controlled junction for better traffic flow in the future. The River Stort crossing will also be widened to accommodate upgraded bus lanes and walking and cycling links, connecting to the Gilston Area development to the new Burnt Mill roundabout and on to the Town Centre.

First Avenue Junction Improvements

March 2026 saw Essex County Council begin works on improvements to three key junctions along Harlow's First Avenue corridor.

Part of the Garden Town and wider Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan for Harlow, the works across Park Lane, Momples Road and Howard Way aim to improve pedestrian and cycle connections to the Town Centre.

After a public consultation last summer, Park Lane will be the first junction under construction with Momples Road to follow before concluding with Howard Way.

New Bike Hire Scheme Planned for Harlow

Garden Town partners, Harlow Council, are set to take a major step forward in transforming travel across the town with the planned launch of a London-style cycle hire scheme later this year.

The Garden Town's Reimagining How We Can Travel Differently framework revealed that 23% of people in Harlow use cycling, walking and buses as their primary mode of travel.

HGGT partners are looking to double that number across the town in the future, increasing to 60% for residents living in the future Garden Town communities.

Play Street at Hare Street

With UNICEF recognising 11 June 2025 as the International Day of Play for children worldwide, HGGT and Sustrans teamed up to run a Play Streets event at Hare Street Community Primary School in Harlow.

Custodians of the National Cycle Network in the UK, Sustrans cordoned off the area directly outside Hare Street to give Year One and Year Two pupils the unique opportunity of playing safely in front of the school gates for the very first time across a range of fun activities.

The Sustrans (now Walk Wheel Cycle Trust) team organised board games, a bubble machine, hopscotch and arts and crafts as well as bikes for the children to cycle safely around the closed road space.

150+ Free Bike Milestone for Pedal Power Harlow

Essex Pedal Power has given out over 150 free bikes to adults and children across Harlow since launching in December 2024.

Helping eligible residents stay better connected to employment, education and community services, a further 37 bikes found new homes in their Christmas 2025 giveaway.

The collection for local residents was made possible thanks to Rainbow Services, Essex Pedal Power and Bikeability plus local partners including Harlow and Gilston Garden Town, Harlow Council and Active Essex.

Upgrade for Harlow Town Train Station Walking Route

Work is progressing to transform the walking route between Harlow Town Station and the Town Centre, addressing a long-standing issue for Harlow residents and visitors.

The improvements include new landscaping to make the route more attractive, a community-designed mural to celebrate local identity and digital signage to help people find their way and encourage walking.

These enhancements are being supported by a £49,000 grant from Greater Anglia's Customer and Community Improvement Fund.

Harlow Bus Station Rebuild Begins

The main construction on transforming Harlow bus station into a new Sustainable Transport Hub and Interchange began in August 2025 with Garden Town partners, Harlow Council, planning to deliver:

- Brand-new transport hub with a canopy-covered waiting area and green space
- Modern cycle hub for up to 80 bikes
- Redesigned bus station and Terminus Street, with a new bus exit to Crown Gate
- Vibrant new streetscape that will make the area feel safer, cleaner, and more welcoming

Key Worker Bikes Fixed for Free at PAH

With staff at the Princess Alexandra Hospital in Harlow encouraged to walk and cycle to work, HGGT teamed up with active travel charity Sustrans in July 2025 to fix key worker bikes free of charge.

The event allowed PAH staff to leave their bikes with the dedicated Sustrans team for a faults and safety check before collecting at the end of their working shift.

Local Walking and Cycling Infrastructure Plan

With the existing Local Walking and Cycling Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP) for HGGT dating back to 2020/21, an update has been funded by Essex County Council and the Garden Town to examine both progress and potential new opportunities for active travel routes.

Due to be completed in mid-2026, the update focusses on both the local area and within the new HGGT communities.

Route 6 of the LCWIP, between Harlow Leisurezone and heading south towards Latton Priory, was upgraded by Essex County Council in June 2025 with selective resurfacing, new lighting and vegetation cut back.

Cycling Audit

The Walk Wheel Cycle Trust (formerly Sustrans) undertook a review of all the existing cycle routes in Harlow, auditing their condition and where improvements could be made. The review

has been used as part of the LCWIP update.

Harlow Town Station

Following work previously undertaken for HGGT by architects, WW+P, Jacobs completed an assessment of alternative options for the station forecourt area in November 2025.

A review of both the study and the wider regeneration opportunities was discussed with HGGT's Quality Review Panel.

Bus Studies

Funding from Homes England has been secured to carry out studies exploring how bus services in Harlow can be improved.

Includes:

- Bus Roadmap identifying a range of measures to help deliver increases in bus use, split across short, medium and long term actions.

- Mechanisms to address a congestion hotspot on Southern Way close to Potter Street.
- An assessment of traffic levels and bus reliability before and after COVID-19 on the First and Second Avenue corridors, including analysis of how bus lanes affect reliability.



Economy and Regeneration



3



UK Health Security Agency Confirm Harlow Move

July 2025 saw Government announce that the UK Health Security Agency's new, world-leading biosecurity centre will be built in the Pinnacles area of Harlow, creating 2,750 high-quality jobs and £80 million a year for the local economy once completed.

The National Biosecurity Centre (NBC) will increase the speed and scale of research into dangerous pathogens and life-saving vaccines, boosting healthcare and economic growth, and protecting UK national security.

The Government is investing billions of pounds in the project, including £250 million over this Parliament, to bring together vital research and testing that is currently split across UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) sites in Porton Down and Colindale, under one roof at the Harlow site.

Operating within the UK Innovation Corridor, the NBC will be the largest in Europe, creating around 1,600 new jobs to support construction of the site, enabling the development of new treatments and vaccines that could save countless lives.

Work to prepare for operation will begin as soon as possible with the first facilities due to open by the mid-2030s.

The whole site is scheduled to be in operation by 2038.

Investment

With HGGT aiming for 1,000 new jobs a year over the next two decades, both IKEA and David Lloyd Leisure opened their doors in Harlow while Harlow Council secured the return of Marks & Spencer to the town.

IKEA launched at Harlow Retail Park in July 2025 with the creation of 40 new jobs.

The new David Lloyd Leisure facility is a £25 million investment into the New Hall area of Harlow and features state-of-the-art health and wellness facilities alongside 150 new jobs.

Nearly 30 of those roles went to residents who had been previously unemployed with David Lloyd Leisure citing Harlow's major transformation and housing growth as "a great opportunity."

Leader of Harlow Council and HGGT Chair, Cllr Dan Swords, and Marks & Spencer Chief Executive, Stuart Machin, confirmed that Marks & Spencer will launch a purpose-built flagship store across two storeys on Harlow's Edinburgh Way in 2027.

The new food and fashion store will create 200-300 new jobs for local people.

Town Centre

Harlow Council's multi-million-pound regeneration of the Broad Walk area was completed in December 2025 and immediately hosted a Christmas market and other festive events.

Works included:

- Complete repaving of Broad Walk, Cross Street and East Walk
- Brand new LED lighting and CCTV provision
- Street furniture
- Tree planting

Work also begun on the redevelopment of Harlow's Market Square, marking the next major step in transforming the heart of the town centre.

The project aims to re-establish the area as a key destination with a weekly market, new seasonal vendor spaces, bars, and restaurants.

Market House will also undergo a significant makeover with flexible workspace provider, CoSpace, set to occupy the upper floors, creating a business hub that supports local entrepreneurs, expanding companies, and national firms.

The building is expected to bring around 300 new jobs when it reopens this year.

A centrepiece of Harlow Council's Town Centre plans began construction in November 2025 and will transform Playhouse Square and College Square into a new Arts and Cultural Quarter.

Works started on the former Occasio House site and will progress to the Playhouse Theatre.

Once completed, the Arts and Cultural Quarter will not only make Harlow Town Centre and the wider Harlow and Gilston Garden Town development an active and vibrant go-to destination but a regional powerhouse for creativity, attracting talent, investment, and visitors from across the East of England.

Essex Housing Awards

Nearly 80 years after designing Harlow New Town, Sir Frederick Gibberd was back in the spotlight at the Essex Housing Awards 2025.

An animated version of the famous architect and masterplanner is the face of Harlow and Gilston Garden Town's online digital assistant service, which was a finalist in the Smart Working category.

The AI version of Sir Frederick Gibberd is powered by Garden Town partners, Hello Lamp Post, and allows residents to ask a question on Harlow and Gilston 24/7/365 as well as the Town Centre regeneration currently taking place.

Landscape and Green Infrastructure



4



Strategic Landscape Framework Secured for Gilston

In March 2026, East Herts Council approved the Strategic Landscape Masterplan (SLMP) for the Gilston Area, establishing a long-term framework for one of the UK's most significant garden town expansions.

Prepared by Grant Associates on behalf of Places for People, the plan covers over 600 hectares, and places landscape at the heart of future growth.

The SLMP adopts a landscape-led approach, drawing on the character of Hunsdon, Gilston Park and the Stort Valley to shape a coherent and enduring framework for new communities, strengthening biodiversity and expanding access to countryside, sport and recreation.

At its core is a defining principle: landscape is not a backdrop to development, but its primary infrastructure, shaping place, identity and long-term resilience.



The masterplan establishes a comprehensive network of green and blue infrastructure, including:

- 410 hectares of integrated green space for recreation and wellbeing
- 48.5km of walking and cycling corridors connecting communities
- 14.5km of heritage trails
- Five major new parks, alongside a range of local open spaces
- Enhanced Stort Valley access, with new and improved paths
- Flood meadows and wetlands supporting natural water management

- New habitat connections and biodiversity enhancements
- Existing and new woodland, alongside retained agricultural land
- Allotments and productive landscapes
- Sports facilities serving schools and the wider community

The strategy responds directly to the challenges of climate change and biodiversity loss through habitat creation, sustainable drainage and careful stewardship of natural resources.

At the same time, it prioritises health and wellbeing, embedding access to nature into everyday life and supporting active, low-carbon lifestyles.



Looking Ahead



5



Sustainable Movement

Spring/Summer 2026 will see Gilston developer, Places for People, lead on the next delivery phase of the Sustainable Transport Corridor and the Central Stort Crossing area of the Garden Town.

It begins with Eastwick roundabout being upgraded to a traffic light signal junction, works that will allow for a better traffic flow and accommodate the future site entrance for buses and cycling to the Gilston Area development.

The next stage of the Central Stort Crossing works include the widening of the existing Fifth Avenue (A414) Stort Crossing, retaining the same highway capacity as the existing bridge alongside the new Sustainable Transport Corridor with dedicated public transport lanes and segregated walking and cycling routes.

This will include a new pedestrian and cyclist bridge.

Longer term plans include the delivery of the Eastern Stort Crossing infrastructure project connecting the Gilston Area to the north east of Harlow at River Way.

The proposed plans represent a major investment in healthy and climate friendly active and sustainable travel and helps to support travel choice for new and existing residents.

The works timetable currently looks like this:

Stage 1a – Eastwick Roundabout – Spring/ Summer 2026 to Autumn 2028

Stage 1b – New bridge construction and connection to Burnt Mill Roundabout – 2029 to 2033.

Stage 2b – Bypass to Pye Corner – 2031 to 2035

Stages 2c and 2d - Eastern Stort Crossing and River Way bridge – 2031 to 2036

HGGT Partnership

While much progress has been made since the Garden Town designation in 2017, it has not been to the scale and pace originally envisaged.

As a result, the Partnership have commissioned an Independent Review to explore and document any issues and challenges, and to make recommendations on the role of the public sector, whether locally, regionally, or nationally in addressing them.

One of these challenges is the approach to funding and delivering infrastructure beyond that needed to unlock Gilston, which will be considered in further detail in the Review.

The Review will also consider Garden Town governance, and will provide options and recommendations for how this may evolve to have a greater focus on delivery, as the Garden Town transitions from a policy and planning phase into development and infrastructure delivery.

The Review will begin in June 2026 with a report scheduled for September 2026.

Local authority Partners will be kept updated regarding the progress of the Review, with engagement with Joint Committee Members planned as part of the Review process.

Economy and Regeneration

Harlow Council will continue the regeneration of the Town Centre with the redevelopment of Market Square and the

adjacent Market House set to be completed in the second half of 2026.

Placemaking and Homes

Places for People are collaborating with the HGGT partnership and local stakeholders and community groups to develop masterplans for Gilston Area villages 5 and 6 required to enable delivery of a new sustainable transport corridor connecting Village 7 to Village 1. The master plans are due to be submitted in late summer 2026.

Places for People have also announced a joint venture with Barratt Redrow which marks a new phase for the delivery of the Gilston Area Villages 1 – 6.

Following refusal of planning permission for Latton Priory, the next steps will focus on engaging with the developers and stakeholders to agree a way forward.

This may include progressing a revised application or considering an appeal, with any future proposals addressing identified issues.

Ongoing collaboration will be key to ensuring alignment with Garden Town objectives and delivering a robust, policy-compliant scheme.

HGGT Partners will continue to work closely with developers at Water Lane and East of Harlow to progress the strategic masterplanning needed to support future planning applications, alongside coordinating infrastructure planning and delivery. In parallel, the Partnership will consider the potential implications of Princess Alexandra Hospital not relocating to the East of Harlow site, following the recent announcement that the NHS Trust is exploring redevelopment of its existing hospital facilities in Harlow. Ongoing engagement with partners and stakeholders will be important to ensure the schemes remain aligned with Garden Town objectives and can be delivered in a coordinated and sustainable way.



