

Harlow and Gilston Quality Review Panel

Report of Formal Review Meeting: Latton Priory

Thursday 28 July 2022

Epping Forest District Council, 323 High Street, CM16 4BZ

Panel

Peter Maxwell (chair)
Janinder Bhatti
Sabine Hogenhout
Richard Lewis
Prachi Rampuria

Attendees

Ione Braddick	Epping Forest District Council / HGGT
Merve Anil	Epping Forest District Council
Nick Finney	Epping Forest District Council
Richard Schunemann	Epping Forest District Council
Krishma Shah	Epping Forest District Council
Dawa Pratten	Harlow & Gilston Garden Town
Tai Tsui	Essex County Council
David Sprunt	Essex County Council
Lucy Block	Frame Projects
Joe Brennan	Frame Projects

Apologies / report copied to

Tanusha Waters	Harlow & Gilston Garden Town
Adam Halford	Harlow Council
John Hoad	Harlow Council
Paul Wilkinson	Essex County Council
Deborah Denner	Frame Projects
Roxanne Salburg	Frame Projects

This is a pre-application review, and therefore confidential. As public organisations Harlow District Council, East Hertfordshire District Council and Epping Forest District Council are subject to the Freedom of Information Act (FOI) and Environmental Information Regulations (EIR), and in the case of an FOI/EIR request may be obliged to release project information submitted for review.

1. Project name and site address

Latton Priory, Latton Priory Farm, Harlow, CM17 9LH

2. Presenting team

Jeff Nottage	Broadway Malyan
Sophie Medhurst	Broadway Malyan
Iain Macsween	Hallam Land Management
Charlotte Robinson	CEG
Nick Freer	David Lock Associates
Claire Britton	David Lock Associates

3. Planning authority's briefing

Latton Priory is envisaged to provide approximately 1,050 new homes and employment space, together with a range of facilities and infrastructure including a local centre, primary and secondary schools, SUDS, suitable alternative natural greenspace (SANGS) and a sustainable transport corridor connecting Latton Priory to Harlow. While 1,500 new homes are proposed by the applicant, a commitment has not yet been made to deliver this increased number; conversations remain to be had and the potential impact assessed.

During 2018 to 2020, several meetings and workshops have been held between key stakeholders including EFDC, the main site promoters (previously Boyer Planning and now David Lock Associates, who are acting on behalf of CEG and Hallam Land), ECC (Highway and Education), and HDC (neighbouring authority and part of the Garden Town and location of the STC). The site has previously been reviewed by the Quality Review Panel on two occasions.

After a pause in masterplanning work in 2021, the developers re-engaged with the EFDC Implementation Team in early 2022, in part due to the successful bid for an authority-led Latton Priory Design Code. In recent weeks there have been five further masterplanning workshops to discuss: the traveller and gypsy pitches; sustainable mobility; schools and local health centre; character, density and sustainability; and the local centre and employment.

Officers welcome the panel's comments on the overall design, character and place-shaping issues raised at the previous reviews. Feedback related to the overall approach to supporting modal shift, as well as the sustainability strategy and long-term stewardship, are also welcome. The panel is also invited to comment on the impact of not developing Dorrington Farm, and the associated impacts on the layout and connectivity.

5. Quality Review Panel's views

Summary

The panel is pleased to see the design team and Council working collaboratively, and it feels that the proposals have developed well since the last review. Supporting



modal shift will be fundamental to the masterplan and design code, and the panel feels that this should be reinforced more strongly through the design. The neighbourhood centre still feels too car-dominated, and the routes across the site need to be developed further to address the hierarchy and character of these spaces. A focus on promoting pedestrian and cycle use is crucial and, as raised previously, the panel suggests that the topography needs to be understood to make the site accessible for all abilities and ages. The panel feels that the sustainability and energy strategy lacks detail, and it would like to see fundamental decisions considered as part of the masterplan work, to address passive design measures including layout and orientation, as well as options for renewable energy and distribution. The design code content looks robust, and the panel notes that it will be important that this piece of work is exemplary to allow this approach to be applied to other council projects in the future. It urges the team to consider the approach to the planning application, to address outline parameters for the masterplan and the levels of control built into the design code.

These comments are expanded below, alongside recommendations made at the previous reviews that remain relevant.

Massing, layout and development density

- The panel feels that the layout could be more responsive to the site topography. As noted at the previous review, the panel would like to see how the topography will be fully considered to contribute to a particular character for Latton Priory.
- The proposed development density seems appropriate, but the panel feels that the approach should be determined not simply by the housing numbers required as part of the site designation, but also be sufficient to maintain vitality, jobs and promote a sense of community for the new neighbourhoods created.
- The building heights and their relationship to the public realm needs to be developed further. This should not be through character areas only, but should have sufficient complexity to allow different areas to relate appropriately to the street character, public realm and landscaped spaces.
- The panel has ongoing concerns about the edge conditions across the site, at the site boundary as well as to neighbouring landowners, including Dorrington Farm and Riddings House. It would like to see further detail to understand how the masterplan resolves these and integrates with existing neighbourhoods.
- The panel suggests that the team should clearly demonstrate that the layout, plot and block structure have been tested and allow for flexibility for different unit mixes and typologies, particularly in relation to sustainable design considerations.
- An open space strategy should be developed for the whole site, including provision of locally- and neighbourhood-equipped areas of play (LEAPs and NEAPs)



Modal shift

- The panel commends the approach to modal shift and recognises that car parking has been reduced, however it suggests that this can go further.
- Developing a clear approach to sustainable modes will be critical, and should address phasing and implementation of options. Early delivery of elements, like the STC, will be important to establish behaviour change from the outset.
- The revised avenue route is an improvement, however the panel feels that the masterplan could be even more unattractive for private vehicle traffic. Making car journeys more difficult will act as a deterrent and the panel suggests looking at Houten in the Netherlands as a good example.
- Creating walkable and cyclable communities will be integral to supporting modal shift. A strategy should be conceived as part of a wider network, with routes mapped against the site topography to ensure that they are inclusive to all ages and abilities.
- The central mobility hub works well, and the panel suggests that additional hubs and/or car-club bays should be distributed across the site to further promote shared modes. The team is also encouraged to liaise with operators early on, to understand viability and the potential impact on parking ratios.
- Alternative typologies and innovative approaches to parking should be considered further, including how parking areas can be adapted and repurposed as demand decreases. The parking approach taken at Marmalade Lane is a good precedent to reference.
- Car parking for the commercial areas within the town centre could be made more flexible, to accommodate activities at different times of the day and week, such as markets and community events.

Placemaking, character and quality

- The panel fully supports the proposed mix of uses and their location within the local centre to underpin viability and vibrancy.
- The panel feels that the development of the character areas is successful. It suggests that the design code will be fundamental to developing the identity and distinctiveness of these different spaces.
- The town centre options are welcome, and the panel feels that the high street option could be successful and have a strong relationship with the east-west avenue.
- The panel would welcome further detail on the analysis of economic sustainability. Further assessment of demand for retail and commercial uses



should be developed, to understand how the employment offer will fit into the wider context of the Garden Town.

- The character of the streets should also be developed further, to understand how they support different uses and social functions.
- The panel suggests that there could be further opportunities at the intersections of the north-south green fingers, east-west avenue and green corridor, to develop moments of intensity. These nodes could facilitate social areas, pocket parks and play spaces.
- The panel notes that child-friendly design will be an important consideration for the street design. It recommends that the design team look at examples in the Netherlands, as well as within the UK.
- Play spaces, social areas and street furniture should be located in sunny areas to ensure that they are usable throughout the year.
- It was acknowledged that Latton Priory needs to include the incorporation of two traveller pitches. These are an important component of the masterplan, however these were not reviewed during the session.

Connectivity and routes

- The panel feels that the masterplan should be more outward looking. Public routes should connect with local neighbourhoods, Harlow town centre, green spaces and social infrastructure, such as Gibberd College.
- The panel feels that the connections to the north should be strengthened. As noted at the previous review, connectivity will be crucial to ensure that Latton Priory is not perceived as a 'satellite' or dormitory suburb.
- The panel suggests that the hierarchy of the avenue, residential streets, the green corridor and green fingers should be more clearly differentiated. The scale, enclosure and character of these routes should respond to private and public uses within the masterplan, making sure these are not oversized.
- The new alignment of the east-west green corridor works well and the link to the park is a positive move. However, the panel notes that this route needs to be purposeful and respond to desire lines.
- The detail of the street design developed in section is welcome. The panel notes that below-ground services and utilities should also be considered, alongside tree root zones and SUDS features.
- The panel would like to see further detail on the layout of the avenue in plan, to understand the arrangement of cycle, pedestrian and vehicle routes. This should include detail of integrated traffic calming measures, such as speed bumps, raised tables and crossings.



- The panel suggests that the east-west avenue could be tightened-up to feel more residential in scale. Frontages onto this space will be important to address safety and provide passive surveillance.
- The removal of Dorrington Farm from the development site is a significant challenge and will form a problematic barrier, restricting movement from north to south. Opportunities to provide a public right of way or agreement to cross the farm access road would be beneficial and improve travel times.
- A similar dislocation occurs with Riddings House situated in the middle of the north-east character area. Better connections to Latton Bush here will be vital to avoid it becoming a large cul-de-sac development.

Sustainable design

- The panel would like to see more detail on the sustainable aspirations for the masterplan, with commitments clearly established. The Garden Town Sustainability Toolkit should be referred and used as a driver for the design.
- The embodied carbon of the site infrastructure should be considered. The panel notes that optimising the amount of hard surfaces and roads can have significant carbon savings. The team should engage with the Council, civil engineers, contractors and suppliers such as Cemex.
- The panel would like to see more detail on the approach to renewables as part of the masterplan strategy. It notes that fossil fuels should not be used throughout. Distribution and production of renewable energy is likely to affect the layout, particularly options such as district heating and ground source heat pumps.
- Passive design measures should be considered to reduce energy and heating demand, as well as operational carbon. The panel notes that this will affect orientation, road layout, entrances, accessibility and elevational treatments.
- Green spaces should also consider sustainable design impacts, such as the placement of trees for shading and microclimate design.
- Public spaces should clearly respond to climate change. For instance, some seating areas should be shaded for sunnier times of the year.
- The design code should identify sustainable architectural design, for instance how to incorporate external shading. This will create a different aesthetic to the surrounding area, which should be seen as part of the architectural language of this new place.
- The focus on sustainable transport is positive, but the panel notes that social and economic sustainability also needs to be considered. The mobility hub is focused on transport, but could also provide shared spaces and resources, for example establishing a Library of Things for renting tools and appliances.



- Community will also play an important role in the sustainability and resilience of Latton Priory. The team should consider how to facilitate this within the masterplan to support sustainable lifestyles.

Design code

- The panel commends the approach to the design code and feels that the proposed contents is robust.
- The panel feels that the main challenge will be to embed time and programme considerations, given that Latton Priory will likely change over the delivery of the masterplan.
- Engagement will also be challenging, as it will need to anticipate who will live and work in these new communities.
- The panel suggests that the design code should enable a level of flexibility to allow the document to evolve over time and allow for future innovation. Consultation should be continued through the delivery phases to apply lessons learnt.
- The panel suggests referring to the Bridgewater Triangle design code for London Legacy Development Corporation, developed by Mikhail Riches, as a useful precedent. It is important to think about how the development specification, parameters and design codes interrelate, as well as what they set, at which stage of planning, and in what order.

Planning process and stewardship

- The panel suggests that the coordination of the outline plan, masterplan framework and design code should be considered carefully, if they are to be programmed simultaneously.
- It recommends that the team engage with the Council to develop the design parameters at outline planning, as well as at the strategic masterplan level of detail.
- The panel feels that the previous comments regarding stewardship have not been developed sufficiently. The panel notes that this will be critical to the success of Latton Priory and it would like to see full consideration given to potential stewardship models, particularly around community ownership and agency.

Next steps

- The panel feels that positive improvements have been made since the last review. It would encourage the team to come back for a further review when the masterplan and design code have developed further.

