# EIA Quality Mark Case Study

## Land North of Gilden Way - Harlowbury

### Key Issues –

The Harlowbury development site had a number of key environmental issues which were considered throughout the design process, including the existing landscape setting and potential visual impact of the proposed development.

A key design requirement was to facilitate a positive relationship between the neighbouring areas of Old Harlow and Churchgate Street, two important historic areas of Harlow which were retained during the development of Harlow New Town. The Harlowbury development is part of the next phase of the town's growth, and so it was important that it did not detract from these historic areas whilst also retaining a visual connection to them and facilitating views of local landmarks including St Mary’s and St John’s Churches.

The EIA process therefore had a key role to play in the design evolution of the masterplan which was being prepared for an outline planning application.

### Purpose of the project

Harlow is located within the M11 growth corridor and has been firmly established as a growth point, required to deliver substantial residential development by 2021, to help meet housing demands in South East England. A mixed-use development is proposed for land to the north of Gilden Way to meet these needs.

### Description of the project

The proposed development comprises up to 25.8 ha of residential land including a mixed-use area, community facilities and a 2-form entry primary school. The scheme will provide approximately 1200 dwellings in a range of types and sizes.

The masterplan includes a green corridor between the proposed development and the existing areas of Old Harlow. This follows the principles of the New Town Plan, with ‘green fingers’ separating neighbourhoods and sub-neighbourhoods. There is also provision for areas of public open space including allotments and sports pitches.
Lessons learnt
Due to the significance of the existing landscape setting and visual sensitivities it was imperative that there was a close working relationship, throughout the design process, between the masterplanning team and the landscape architects who undertook the Landscape Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA). This ensured that where possible mitigation by design was incorporated within each iteration of the masterplan design.

The use of Geographical Information Systems (GIS) and Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV) studies were invaluable and integral throughout this process. The ZTV analysis not only allowed for the identification of sensitive visual receptors for the LVIA but was also used as a design tool. Various options of the masterplan layout and spatial distribution of building heights were tested, through ZTV modelling, to ensure that views of St Mary’s Church and St Johns Church were retained and enhanced as the design evolved.

The retention of these visual links to prominent local landmarks has strengthened the sense of integration and connectivity between the proposed development and the existing townscape of Harlow, while the green fingers provide a sense of separation from the historic centres.

Lessons learnt cont. -
GIS also played an integral role in the topography context analysis. Harlow lies within the Stort Valley which is incised with side valleys containing tributaries, and the new town plan is underpinned by retention of low lying green valleys as structural elements of the town. The use of GIS through the design process allowed for identification of patterns relating to contours and gradients within the existing layout of Harlow. This ensured the development proposals were in-keeping with the surrounding townscape.

This integrated approach to design ensured the technical capabilities of different design perspectives are enmeshed; achieving a more robust masterplan which seeks to avoid environmental impacts from the outset. This highlights the ever increasing role that EIA plays throughout the design process.

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