



**Informing development in
North Harlow – identifying &
addressing issues, concerns
and opinions.**

**Gauging the views of Harlow
and East Hertfordshire
residents.**

**Summary of the North Harlow
Community Engagement Process:
summary of events held between
September 2009 and September 2010.**

(Updated in November 2010 to include a
summary of responses received at the September
2010 public exhibitions).

Report Contents:

Introduction and purpose of the report.	Page 2
Event publicity.	Page 2
Community engagement format and events.	Page 3
Summary of key concerns, issues and ideas from the first four events held between September 2009 and January 2010 – Community Engagement Survey; Drop-in Sessions; Community Forums and; North Harlow People’s Panel.	Page 5
Summary of results from the Public Exhibitions held in September 2010.	Page 11
Concluding comments.	Page 16
List of tables:	
Table 1.0 Consultation events publicity schedule.	Page 2

1.0 Introduction and purpose of the report.

The purpose of this summary report is to present a general executive summary of the community engagement events held between September 2009 and September 2010 by the Harlow North Joint Venture partnership (HNJV). Common themes are identified across the events that can be used by the HNJV development team, together with other technical reports, economic feasibility analysis and evidence bases, to inform and shape its masterplan and charter for development on land to the north of Harlow.

The document is in four main sections; the **first** outlines the methods used to publicise the events, the **second** presents a brief outline of each event; the **third** provides a composite summary of the results from the first four events and highlights common issues, concerns and opinions; the **fourth** section presents a summary of results obtained from the final set of events, the public exhibitions, and outlines the public's response to the HNJV's emerging masterplan.

2.0 Event publicity.

In terms of publicising the various consultation events, Table 1.0 presents a schedule of the events and the means that were employed to advertise them in and around Harlow and East Hertfordshire.

Date	Item	Event Publicised
September 2009	North Harlow Website	Drop-in Sessions, Community Forums and registration for the People's Panel
29 September 2009	Stakeholder Mailing	Drop-in Sessions
30 September 2009	Newsletter Mailing (to 14,000 residents and businesses)	Drop-in Sessions People's Panel
October 2009	Advert – Widford Parish Magazine	Widford Drop-In Session
1, 8, 15 October 2009	Advert and website listing – Mercury, Observer and Harlow Star	Drop-in Sessions
16, 17, 23, 24 October 2009	Drop-in exhibition boards	Community Forums People's Panel
5, 12 November 2009	Advert and website listing – Mercury, Observer and Harlow Star	Community Forums
14, 16 th November 2009	Community Forums	People's Panel
August and Sept 2010	Newsletter Mailing, advert and website listing – Mercury, Observer and Harlow Star	Public Exhibitions in Harlow and East Hertfordshire.

A number of mechanisms were used to advertise the various events including direct mailed newsletters, announcements on the HNJV website, announcements

made in local newspapers and direct reminders made at both the Drop-in Sessions and at the Community Forums.

The events were facilitated by members of Urban Design and Mediation Ltd (ud+m) brought in by HNJV to independently manage an engagement process with the local communities.

3.0 Community engagement format and events.

The purpose of the community engagement programme was to ensure that local people were given a range of opportunities to make their views known regarding the proposed development of North Harlow. Local residents were firstly invited to record their key concerns, issues and opinions of their local area, to make comment regarding their current access to facilities and services and to record their perceptions of Harlow.

The intention of this process was to ensure that the HNJV development team was fully informed regarding local people's views and knowledge of the area. The HNJV development team committed to demonstrate in public how this information was used to inform, shape and influence its subsequent masterplan proposals and this demonstration formed the basis of the public exhibitions held in September 2010.

Five consultation events have been held to date between September 2009 and September 2010. Each event had a different format and offered opportunities for local residents to make their views known on a variety of topics and in a variety of ways.

- **A Community Engagement Survey** carried out in September 2009 asked residents to make their views known regarding their current access to facilities and services, improvements that they might wish to see and their perceptions of Harlow. The survey was issued by HNJV via a newsletter and the HNJV website to 14,000 addresses in Harlow and East Hertfordshire in September 2009. The survey was based on a questionnaire format and was available for completion up to the end of November 2009. The questionnaire was completed by 407 people.

- The **Drop-in Sessions** held in October provided information that informs the HNJV team in terms of what local people value about their area. The material collected also indicated possible improvements that would benefit the area and highlighted views people had regarding the development. The drop-in sessions were held at the Harvey Centre, Harlow, High Wych memorial hall and Widford village hall, East Hertfordshire, in October 2009. Approximately 700 people attended the drop-in sessions. 1200 post it notes, containing approximately 1300 comments were completed. Analysis of the material reveals approximately 260 comments describing what respondents “like” about their area; approximately 340 comments outlining how their area might be “improved” and approximately 700 comments outlining people’s “concerns” regarding the proposed development of North Harlow.
- The **Community Forums** held in November 2009 provided the opportunity for the HNJV team to hear first hand the views that residents have regarding the development and provided an opportunity for local people to ask direct and detailed questions of the HNJV design and development team. Specific and detailed issues were identified. Five community forums were held at The Latton Bush Centre, Harlow and the Manor of Groves Hotel, East Hertfordshire, in November 2009. Around a hundred people attended the community forums, some people did not stay for the full session. Supporters of Stop Harlow North attended the forums as observers. Throughout the sessions they voiced views and opinions and asked questions framed within their view that any development in the area would be undemocratic, unsustainable and unnecessary.
- The first **North Harlow People’s Panel** survey was issued on January 6th and 7th 2010. The results of the survey provide an indication of where the respondents’ priorities lie in relation to the issues, concerns, opinions and ideas generated through the community engagement Drop-in Sessions and Community Forums held in October and November 2009. Where the earlier events simply listed the issues, the results from the People’s Panel illustrate the relative importance that local people give to each issue – this could be used to guide the development team’s responses to the various issues

identified to date. Out of a total of 304 people who voluntarily registered for the People's Panel via the earlier Drop-in Sessions, Community Forums and HNJV website, 172 entries were made with 156 full or partial completions (51% response rate). The survey was open until February 2nd 2010. Respondents to the survey were resident in postcode areas CM17, CM18, CM19, CM20, CM21, CM23, EN8, EN10, SE1 and SG12 and represent a range of age groups and mix of economic activity categories broadly representative of the existing populations of Harlow and East Hertfordshire. The survey was based on the position "What IF development was to occur north of Harlow?" rather than it 'should' or 'will' happen and asked respondents to indicate the priority that they gave to the features, issue and items identified at the earlier events. Analysis of the survey results reveals little significant difference in responses when examined for variation in response by postcode, age or economic activity.

- Two **Public Exhibitions** were held on September 11th 2010 at the Harvey Centre, Harlow and on September 14th 2010 at the Manor of Groves Hotel, East Herts. The exhibitions aimed to demonstrate in public how the HNJV had responded to the results of the earlier events and to gauge people's responses to the emerging proposals for development on land to the north of Harlow. Approximately 275 people visited the exhibitions across the two days and 99 people completed a feedback questionnaire. Respondents to the questionnaire were resident in postcode areas AL7, CM17, CM18, CM19, CM20, CM21, CM23, EN10, SG9, SG10, SG12, SG13 and SG19 and represent a range of age groups.

4.0 Summary of key concerns, issues and ideas from the first four events held between September 2009 and January 2010 – Community Engagement Survey; Drop-in Sessions; Community Forums and; North Harlow People’s Panel.

Two sets of summary information can be extracted from an analysis of the results of these events i) common general items and ii) issue specific items.

4.1 General comments:

In terms of general comments four views are common across the four events:

- *Objections to the principle of development – comments are recorded that it is undemocratic, unsustainable and unnecessary, it will damage the existing landscape and character of the area - and linked to this there is an indication that no access, service or facility improvements are needed in the respondents’ area;*
- *Support for the regeneration of Harlow but a worry that the new development will damage the town and a desire to know how the development will actually help Harlow. There is a further view that regeneration should take place within the town’s existing boundaries;*
- *A high degree of concern about the impact that new development will have on the existing social, educational, community and healthcare infrastructure and transport systems;*
- *Some opinion directly supporting development with comments that it would be “good for the area” and specifically that “people need to live somewhere” and that it would address the need for “more houses, schools and employment” in the locality.*

4.2 Issue specific items.

In terms of issue specific items a comparative analysis of the results from the consultation events reveals four issues that are common across each event:

1. Issues of traffic capacity and management;
2. Issues concerned with facilities and services;

3. Issues with local character and

4. Issues of natural resources.

In order to summarise the points of concern common across the events, the key points are listed below and from these a series of composite summary statements have been constructed by the facilitators for each of the 4 key issues.

4.2.1 Composite Statement for Traffic capacity & management issues (Issue 1).

This was a recurring issue. A number of people asked how traffic would be managed in and around the existing villages and town, as well as any new development to reduce future congestion and improve the current situation. Other key points include concerns over present and future congestion on the A414, whether a new by-pass could be incorporated in the plans, increasing public transport provision, park and ride services, and improving facilities at Harlow train station. A composite statement that reflects these common views is that:

“People would like to see current and future traffic congestion relieved. They are particularly concerned with increased traffic on the A414, traffic capacity around Harlow Station and increased traffic running through existing villages. They would like to see a new M11 junction and a Harlow bypass. They want to know exactly where access into the new development will be and would like to know how adequate parking will be provided within the new development and how additional parking can be provided at Harlow Station. They would also like to see improvements to the public transport systems in and around Harlow.”

4.2.2 Composite Statement for facilities and services issues (Issue 2).

People were concerned that existing health services struggled to cope with existing demand, and asked about primary healthcare facilities. They also asked about the level of employment and training opportunities; and levels of investment into the area. Other issues raised included the scale of affordable housing, the mix of tenure, the regeneration of Harlow, schools, and community facilities. A composite statement that reflects these common views and that also

incorporates some of the priorities indicated through the People's Panel results is that:

“The provision of adequate healthcare, education, social and community facilities was consistently high on people’s agendas. Specific requests were made for the provision of services for young people and the over 60s. The provision of affordable housing with a variety of type and tenure was also seen as a top priority. There were requests that the provision of these facilities and services should be made in tandem with the provision of housing in the new development so as not to swamp existing services and these facilities should be provided within easy walking distances of homes in the new development. There was also a request for new employment opportunities within walking distance of homes in any new neighbourhoods”.

4.2.3 Composite Statement for local character issues (Issue 3).

Across all the events, people were keen to understand how the existing distinctive features of the area would be protected and enhanced. They also wanted to know how the project would make sure Harlow North became a distinctive place, and not just an anonymous area. Questions were also raised about the density of the scheme. How many homes would there be? What proportion of the area would be given over to employment uses? How will the project protect the identity of existing villages? What green spaces would be provided? What changes are proposed to the greenbelt? The composite statement for this issue that reflects these common views and that also incorporates some of the priorities indicated through the People's Panel results is that:

“The existing landscape of East Hertfordshire and the existing, Gibberd inspired, green spaces and structure of Harlow are both seen as extremely important to local people and should be the starting point in terms of defining the green and landscape character of any development. The existing landscape and its wildlife should be respected and positively responded to, while new development needs to incorporate green space and wildlife provision. At a neighbourhood scale in any new development local parks, playing fields, play areas and woodlands should be provided – all

within walking distance of homes. Existing village character needs to be protected and the densities, form, scale and mass of the new development needs to be defined in relation to the existing places and landscape. Local people want to know how much development there will be, exactly where it will go and what it will look like. If development was to occur then people prefer low density two storey development but also indicate that a variety of housing type – mainly family housing - would be preferable to an “everywhere looks the same” solution”.

4.2.4 Composite Statement for natural resources issues (Issue 4).

People were consistently concerned about energy, sewage and water supply – will it be adequate? What energy efficiency measures would be taken? What is the Joint Venture’s energy strategy? How would the partnership work to secure the upgrade of facilities like Rye Meads? What are the associated flood risks? The composite statement for this issue that reflects these common views, incorporating the priorities indicated through the People’s Panel results is that:

“The key feature of discussions around the topic of natural resources was the extremely high support indicated for the use of current best practice in terms of energy efficiency, waste management and water conservation in any development. Residents’ priorities seem to be higher for conservation measures rather than for energy generation measures – but the differences in support are marginal. Overall, any new development must have high levels of energy efficiency. Participants have yet to be convinced that the Rye Meads sewage plant and the local water and electricity supplies will be adequate to support the new development and are sceptical of the provision of funding to affect upgrades to these services”.

These composite statements only provide the emerging key headlines and given the volume and richness of the material collected throughout the consultation process it is considered vital that the development team review the material from each of the four consultation events.

4.3 Summary comments on the first four consultation events – September 2009 to January 2010.

The analysis of material from the events held between September 2009 and January 2010 shows a high degree of commonality between each set of results. The material produced provides a clear indication of both the concerns and development priorities of local people.

Although the material generated at event locations in both Harlow and East Hertfordshire and from the differing post code areas were very similar there are a small number of noteworthy differences in emphasis:

- More positive features about Harlow were identified at the Harlow locations;
- There was a stronger feeling that more affordable housing was needed, particularly for younger people, recorded at the Harlow locations;
- There was also a clearer indication given at the Harlow sessions that more facilities for the young people of Harlow need to be provided;
- Both sets of respondents recorded their concern over the loss of green belt, green spaces and countryside, however this was more strongly expressed at the East Hertfordshire locations;
- There are noticeably more negative comments in principle to the development in the material recorded in the East Hertfordshire locations;
- A negative perception of Harlow and Essex was expressed more strongly in the material recorded in the East Hertfordshire locations;

This material provides not just an indication of people's views regarding development but also gives some clear indications in terms of the features that any new development should have – such as the strong indication that any new neighbourhoods should have facilities within comfortable walking distances of homes and that current best practice in relation to energy, water and waste conservation are seen as top priorities. Knowledge of these issues, concerns and opinions can inform the HNJV development team in terms of its ideas for the area.

5.0 Summary of results from the public exhibitions held in September 2010.

Two sets of data are presented as a summary of the public exhibitions; i) the HNJV's responses to the issues raised at the earlier events and; ii) people's responses to the material on display and to the questionnaire issued at the exhibitions.

5.1 HNJV's responses to the identified issues.

The HNJV's responses were structured under the five headings of: protecting quality of life; improving Harlow and East Hertfordshire; respecting the spirit of the place; natural resources and; movement. The text below is taken directly from the public exhibition panels.

5.1.1 Protecting quality of life.

Delivering investment for the future:

- We know that public sector funding for much needed infrastructure investment will be constrained for many years to come
- We also know that for families struggling to find a new home that they can afford, or young people trying to get their first foot on the property ladder, new solutions to delivering housing are needed;
- A comprehensive development that focuses and controls growth in one location would generate significant funds for local services and infrastructure, as well as providing much needed new homes. It will also assist the regeneration of Harlow itself, bringing new jobs and investment into the region.

Working with local communities:

- We are committed to involving the community in both the planning and building of North Harlow, through, for example, transferring land to community ownership, and enabling legally binding agreements which give local people a stake in the development;
- Above all it would allow residents to shape their relationship with North Harlow, particularly in sensitive areas between existing villages and new

homes. It would ensure that the distinctive identity of each village could be maintained in perpetuity for the benefit of future generations.

5.1.2 Improving Harlow and East Hertfordshire.

North Harlow has the potential to provide:

- Investment of £1.5 billion in site preparation, infrastructure, housing, business space and community facilities.
- Consumer spending of over £65 million into the area in the longer term. Investment to assist Harlow's regeneration initiatives.
- A mix of uses complimentary to Harlow town centre to support both the existing and new communities.
- 10,000 quality new homes of mixed tenure.
- A critical mass of development to enable new community facilities to be delivered and job opportunities created.

5.1.3 Respecting the spirit of the place.

We intend to:

- Continue to listen and learn from local people;
- Increase woodland coverage from 6% to 25%;
- Improve access to the landscape and natural amenities in the area;
- Protect, enhance and expand biodiversity;
- Improve water quality in the River Stort and Hunsdon Meads and create new wetlands and ponds as part of a sustainable drainage system;
- Respond in a positive way to the landscape and character of the site; protecting important views and maximising opportunities for sustainable development;
- Promote a wide range of housing types;
- Realise the potential of Gilston Park by considering local community proposals for Great Gilston Park;

- Embrace the aspirations of British Waterways to improve the recreational use of the Stort Valley.

5.1.4 Natural resources.

We intend to:

- Work with Three Valleys Water to create a water distribution network that sets new levels of resource management;
- Investigate new methods of charging for water in the future to encourage more efficient use;
- Significantly improve the quality of water discharged to local rivers;
- Either work with Thames Water utilities to implement the planned sewerage network upgrade or develop a phased local treatment solution;
- Create energy efficient homes and community buildings;
- Explore opportunities to promote a Community Energy Fund that assists Councils in meeting the requirements to delivery carbon efficient energy solutions;
- Develop innovative local management strategies.

5.1.5 Movement.

We are proposing:

- A development that promotes and makes best use of public transport, integrated into an improved and extended network;
- High quality and safe and pedestrian and cycle environments within the development and improved access across the Stort Valley and beyond;
- A development designed to a human scale with the needs of pedestrians given priority;
- Walking and cycling routes will be integrated with the internal movement network and linked to the existing cycle networks of Harlow;
- Improvements to the existing Stort Crossing;
- A new River Stort crossing, helping to divert traffic away from existing villages;

- A contribution to a new M11 junction (if deemed necessary);
- A contribution to the upgrading of Harlow Town Station including a new pedestrian and cycle bridge, providing access from the north;
- Development access off the A414 in three locations;
- A development that does not exclude the car nor restrict usage but instead sustainable choices will be made available to avoid car use for short journeys to local shops, schools and health and leisure.

5.2 Summary of responses to the public exhibitions.

Visitors to the exhibitions were invited to give their response by completing a questionnaire structured around five key questions that related to the headline topics shown above:

- Q1. What is your overall impression of the proposals for the potential development to the North of Harlow that are on display today?
- Q2. Do you think this masterplan will help address the following issues raised by local people through our earlier consultation events? [Specific sub-questions were asked in terms of local services and facilities; respecting landscape and character; provision of amenities; improving road connections, reducing congestion and providing good public transport].
- Q3. Do you feel that the proposed investment would help meet East Hertfordshire's and Harlow's identified housing needs?
- Q4. Do you feel that the proposed investment would help the regeneration of Harlow and its surrounding areas?
- Q5. Please identify from the list below (jobs and training; opportunities for home ownership; new larger/family housing; opportunities for young people; access to quality local services and facilities; facilities for older persons; any others) the most important issues facing you and your family.
- Visitors were also invited to make further general comments regarding the proposed development.

Analysis of the survey results reveals:

- *Regarding their overall impression, a majority of participants gave a favourable response to the proposal for the potential development to the North of Harlow that was on display.*
- *The majority of respondents indicated a relatively optimistic view of the scheme's potential to achieve positively in regard to the issues of local service and facilities provision; respecting landscape and character; provision of amenities and providing good public transport as identified through the earlier consultation events. However in terms of achieving improvements to roads and affecting a reduction in congestion the majority of respondents felt that the proposals would not achieve improvements.*
- *In terms of local housing need the majority of respondents agreed that the proposals would help to address the identified housing needs of Harlow and East Hertfordshire.*
- *Regarding the regeneration of Harlow and its surrounding area, a small majority of respondents agreed that the development would help with local regeneration. A significant number of respondents simply requested more information in order to answer the question.*
- *With regard to the importance to the respondents and their families of issues such as access to jobs and training; opportunities for home ownership; the provision of new larger/family housing; opportunities for young people; access to quality local services and facilities and facilities for older persons, virtually all issues received a similar number of responses. Issues regarding jobs and young people received more attention from people in Harlow. Access to quality services and facilities for older people, received marginally more attention from the residents of East Hertfordshire.*
- *The issues raised in people's general comments were the same as those identified at the earlier consultation events. In total 63 additional comments were made. No major new issues were mentioned. Two features*

are noticeable from these comments: i) 54% of responses concerned traffic and road infrastructure problems and; ii) most of the comments express concerns rather than direct opposition to the development, with a number of comments (around 22%) expressing qualified support for the development.

The overall response to the material on display at the public exhibitions can be viewed as generally optimistic. The major area that the development team need to address in more detail, if they are to more fully satisfy local concern, remains the issue of traffic management and infrastructure.

6.0 Concluding comments.

The material gathered through the community engagement process provides a valuable resource for both the local communities (by having their opinions recorded), and for the HNJV development team (by being better informed in regard to local opinion). The events represent two key stages in the consultation process.

The first four events were about the HNJV **listening** to the community and becoming better informed. Following this first stage it is considered vital to the legitimacy of the process that the HNJV development team then **demonstrated** in public how the views of local people expressed through the events held between September 2009 and January 2010 were used to influence, inform and shape its thinking and the production of its masterplan proposals. This demonstration was undertaken through two public exhibitions held in September 2010 that provide the HNJV with direct feedback from the community on its proposals. Overall the process provides the HNJV with prioritised knowledge of the community's issues, concerns, opinions and views on the proposed development to the north of Harlow. This knowledge should continue to be used by the HNJV development team to inform its evolving ideas for the area.

In light of these comments the facilitators make four recommendations:

- The material gathered through the public consultation events and exhibitions should be used to further refine the development team's

thinking and to inform the production of any subsequent revised or refined masterplan and/or detail design;

- Although extremely valuable, the material gathered to date is relatively general in nature, applying to a large geographical area. It would perhaps be beneficial for more location specific engagement to be undertaken as the masterplan is developed in relation to different parts of the site to ensure that very local level opinion is engaged;
- We strongly recommend that the community engagement process continues as the proposals develop and that every effort is made to ensure that the process is participatory and engages with the local communities in a meaningful way, ensuring that their influence on the emerging masterplan can clearly be seen. Specifically the HNJV team should consider how it can further involve and further expand the membership of the North Harlow People's Panel in this process.
- Copies of this report should be made available to local libraries and made available to the general public via download from HNJV's website.

ud+m

November 2010