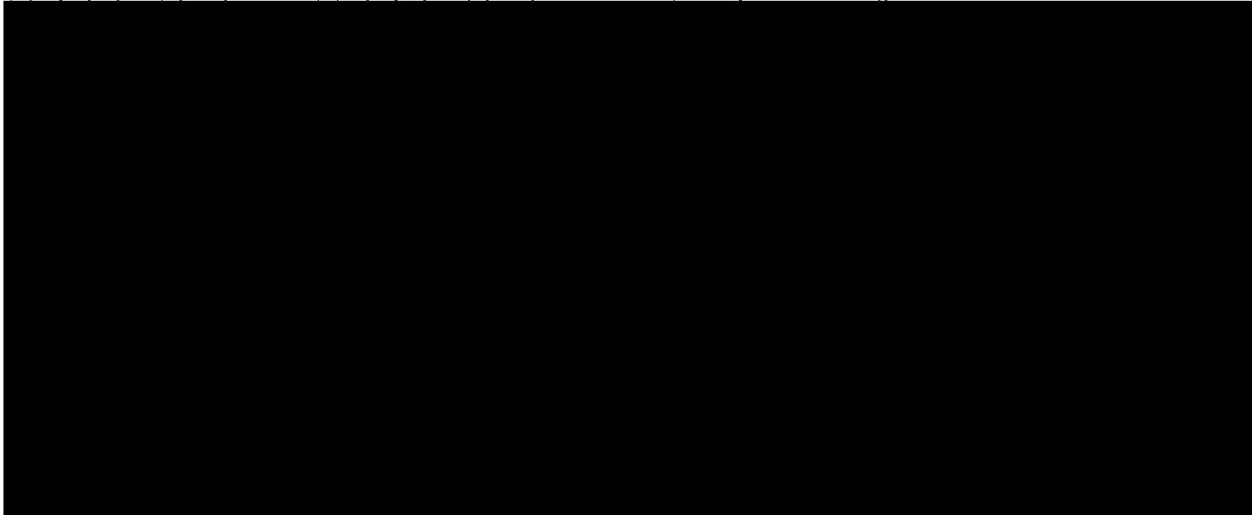




Re: Rosen House Comment on the Harrow Local Plan 2021-2041 Regulation 19

From [REDACTED]
Date Thu 12/12/2024 21:14
To local.plan@harrow.gov.uk <local.plan@harrow.gov.uk>
Cc



Caution: External email

We the undersigned at Rosen House would like to comment on the Harrow Local Plan 2021-2041 Regulation 19. Rosen House is located near the town centre. It is a retirement living development of 29 age-restricted apartments for people over 60. All Rosen House residents are elderly (many are in their 80s and several in their 90s), some are clinically vulnerable and with long-term health problems (e.g. chronic lung disease, kidney disease, dementia, stroke, elderly frail, etc.), and are very concerned that our quality of life will be compromised, and that our physical and mental health will be severely affected if this proposed local plan is approved and implemented.

Having reviewed this new local plan and various policy documents, we consider the proposed development on sites within the Harrow and Wealdstone Opportunity Area (which encompasses the town centre) has many negative impacts on the local areas, residents living within the town centre areas, and especially residents living at Rosen House. We comment first on the Initial Proposal (Regulation 18) Consultation Statement, then on the consultation processes of this local plan (Regulation 19), and finally on the integrated impact assessment, and various policies outlined in the local plan.

A) COMMENT ON HARROW'S NEW LOCAL PLAN CONSULTATION INITIAL PROPOSAL (REGULATION 18) CONSULTATION STATEMENT – OCTOBER 2024

It is good to see that our comments on the initial proposed local plan (Regulation 18) have been incorporated into this consultation statement. Our comments were consistent with feedback provided by various organisations, local groups, and individual members of the general public.

Although the Council claimed that all responses had been considered and changes had been proposed in the next stage, the key changes described were not fully incorporated into the local plan (Regulation 19). Some proposed changes were very descriptive and not fully defined and measurable.

Overall, the council has overlooked the concerns of residents within the Opportunity Area. Changes to the plan have only been made following feedback from residents outside of this area. Additionally, developers and other non-residential organisations have influenced further alterations.

Targets for the Opportunity area have been increased from 7500 to 8750 (with the allocation of 9352) since the Regulation 18 Consultation, despite residents saying 7500 was too much. This raises questions about the council's assertion of 'Putting Residents First.'

B) COMMENT ON THE PROCESSES OF CONSULTATION FOR REGULATION 19

Despite feedback from the last consultation at the stage of Regulation 18, the Council failed to implement this consultation in an inclusive and accessible manner and provided enough time for the general public to review a huge number of documents related to this local plan (Regulation 19).

The overall perception is that the consultation seems rushed. Residents were reportedly allotted six weeks to respond, from the 4th of November to the 17th of December. However, those who had previously responded were only notified on the 17th of November, effectively reducing the actual consultation period to four weeks.

The MS Forms survey provided for making representations proved to be quite challenging as it does not permit users to save their progress and return later to continue from where they left off. Completing it thoroughly, with considered responses and multiple answers, requires more than one session. It is beyond the reach of individuals who are digitally challenged.

C) COMMENT ON NEW HARROW LOCAL PLAN – PROPOSED SUBMISSION (REGULATION 19) VERSION

1) Comment on the Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA) – Non-Technical Summary

The Local Plan Integrated Impact Assessment – Non-Technical Summary was prepared by SLR Consulting Ltd. In the assessment, there are hardly any minor or significant negative impacts have been identified in the Health Objective (IIA4) and the Air, Light, and Noise Pollution Objective (IIA7) against different policies and sites. It is difficult to concur and accept the results of this assessment.

With all the building works and heavy traffic, there will be a significant increase in air and noise pollution. There will be detrimental effects on the health of all residents especially those living within the developing sites. It compromises both national and local strategies for health and well-being.

On page 50 of the IIA Summary, it states that *“A potential uncertain cumulative effect has been identified in the assessment of sites in relation to IIA7 (Air, Light and Noise Pollution). An uncertain cumulative effect is identified as it is unclear whether the potential combined effects of pollution from sites which are in clusters, such as in Wealdstone and Harrow, can be mitigated”*, and *“The growth proposed within the new Harrow Local Plan could combine with growth proposed within these plans and potentially increase traffic and emissions to air, consequently negatively affecting objectives IIA6 (Sustainable Travel), IIA7 (Air, Light and Noise Pollution), and IIA8 (Climate Change Mitigation)”*. Has the Council considered this aspect of the impact assessment and the impact on the health of all residents?

The Equalities Impact Assessment (EQIA) conducted on Living Harrow: The London Borough of Harrow's Climate and Nature Strategy 2023-2030 (November 2023) indicated that exposure to air pollution disproportionately affects socioeconomically disadvantaged populations including Black, Asian, and Multi-Ethnic communities. Furthermore, air pollution has been linked to a range of adverse pregnancy outcomes, including preterm labour and low birth weight, which are risk factors for conditions such as cardiovascular disease and diabetes in adulthood. Exposure to pollution can also affect lung development and function and is thought to contribute to the development of childhood asthma. The proposed developments in this local plan are inconsistent with the Council's strategy on climate and nature.

The negative impact of air pollution has also been highlighted in the Harrow Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2022-2030. Furthermore, this strategy stresses the importance of having access to green and open areas but we are going to be surrounded by tall buildings in the opportunity area. Residents will be living in a concrete jungle, not green space. This proposed local plan is inconsistent with the council's policy on health and wellbeing. The Harrow Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2022 -2030 stresses the importance of creating and embedding health in all policies. Unfortunately, the essence of this strategy does not appear in this proposed local plan.

The lack of or inadequate infrastructure and additional funding for additional primary, community, and secondary healthcare services has not been highlighted in this impact assessment. It is an important factor considering the potential increase in the population, especially within and around the opportunity areas. This will be elaborated on in the comments below.

The council aims to protect the suburbs by directing most of the development to different sites within the opportunity area. The council is proposing tall buildings on these sites. This strategy puts the rights (to a decent standard of living) of residents living in suburbs above those in and adjacent to the opportunity area. This has not been highlighted in the Equalities Impact Assessment (EqIA). These inequalities will be highlighted in our comments on different policies.

2) Strategic Policy 01: High Quality Growth

Policy GR2: Inclusive Neighbourhoods

Policy GR1: Achieving a High Standard of Development

Are the Policies Sound? : No

The growth allocated to the Opportunity Area is disproportionate, placing an undue burden on it. Since its inception in 2013, it has already produced over 3,500 units. The area is relatively small, comprising 69 hectares compared to the borough's 5,047 hectares. The capacity of the Opportunity Area has been repeatedly revised, from an initial 2,900 units to the current 9,352, accounting for 58.3% of the borough's 16,040 housing target. This area represents only 1.3% of the borough's size, making the situation markedly unfair.

According to the London Plan 2021, the Opportunity Area has a capacity of 5,000 homes and 1000 jobs. By 2029, this number will have been reached, and the London Plan 2021 does not call for an additional 4352 units. There is no rationale for increasing housing in the Opportunity Area. The remaining sites should be developed into proper family housing that aligns with the character of the area and maintains the low-rise nature of Station Road.

If the current trajectory continues, the Opportunity Area will have produced nearly 13,000 homes by the end of the plan period. The area is already overdeveloped, negatively affecting the quality of life for both existing and new residents. Adding more flats will exacerbate this issue. Past regeneration efforts have increased inequality within the borough, with those living near the Opportunity Areas experiencing the most significant decline in living standards due to the strain on existing infrastructure. For example, power cuts have become more frequent in neighbourhoods in and adjacent to the Opportunity Area. Despite 11 years of 'regeneration,' the Opportunity Area appears rundown, dirty, and unappealing, suggesting that the regeneration strategy isn't working.

The Harrow and Wealdstone Opportunity Area stands out from other self-contained areas such as Wembley, spanning 239 hectares, and Brent Cross, covering 151 hectares. These areas are located on large plots of land, separate from existing residential neighbourhoods, and are mostly comprised of former industrial sites. As a result, it is unrealistic to expect them to provide the same level of benefits. The Harrow and Wealdstone Opportunity Area encompasses places like Station Road, which borders existing low-rise neighbourhoods where high-density development would not be suitable.

Proposal: Maintain a capacity of 5,000 for the Opportunity Area and allocate the remaining sites for more suitable development. Regulation 18 initially proposed a capacity of 7,500 for the Opportunity Area, which has since been raised to 9,352. The capacity for this area cannot continue to increase indefinitely.

3) Policy GR3A: Inclusive Design

The term 'design-led development' has been used a lot in the plan but doesn't appear to have a true meaning. Do you have design templates/ formats that developers must follow? Each of the new developments wants to be an island on its own with no effort made to achieve a cohesive look or try to enhance or blend in with its surroundings. The Metroland identity referred to in the plan has almost been lost.

4) Strategic Policy 03: Meeting Harrow's Housing Needs

Is the Policy Sound? : No

Despite the limited construction of family-sized social rent homes in the borough, there is no indication that the council can supply the necessary number of such homes for families. Furthermore, a significant portion of the new housing will consist of flats. The council has conflated the provision of social rent homes with 'affordable' rent homes. These two are not necessarily the same and could obscure the actual provision of social rent homes, which are more affordable than intermediate rent/percentage London Rent housing.

Proposed Change: Residents would likely be more receptive to development if it genuinely addressed the housing crisis. Most residents oppose the construction of additional 'luxury flats'.

5) Strategic Policy 04: Local Economy

Is the Policy Sound? : No

There is still no clear strategy for creating the 1000 jobs associated with the Opportunity Area. Are there any employers who would be interested in investing here? Is the Council actively working with any employers to create jobs in the local economy? Does this plan reflect any actions or plans that employers have asked for to create jobs in the opportunity area? Where is the 20-year job creation strategy in the plan, like the details about housing creation? How is this plan aiming to recover the

jobs lost recently in the area at the Council, Debenhams, and the conversion of office space to accommodation?

6) Strategic Policy 05: Harrow & Wealdstone Opportunity Area

Is this Policy Sound? : No

The new plan retains the sub-areas outlined in the 2013 plan, each with a designated role. However, the specific role of each sub-area, especially the Station Road Area, has become unclear. The 2013 plan designated the Station Road sub-area to maintain its low-rise profile, and act as a buffer between the densely populated Harrow and Wealdstone Town Centres, to improve public spaces and connectivity while preserving its unique character. It was considered unsuitable for high-density development due to the risk of congestion and blending into a single town centre.

In contrast, the current plan permits 18-storey buildings in this congested and polluted area, which is recognized as an air quality management area and was found inappropriate for dense housing in the council's tall buildings study. The 2024 Plan's approval of high-density development in Station Road, despite its claim to harmonize with the lower-density suburbs, seems unfeasible. This may unintentionally result in the amalgamation of Harrow and Wealdstone into a singular town centre, a move not directly stated by the council.

It is suggested that the council re-evaluate the density levels in line with the tall buildings study and clarify whether they plan to merge Harrow Town Centre with Wealdstone Town Centre.

7) Strategic Policy 06: Social and Community Infrastructure and Harrow Infrastructure Delivery Plan

Is the Policy Sound? : No

The details regarding infrastructure remain insufficient. There is no dedicated funding, and there's a reliance on contributions from developers, which are not assured as developers often manage to avoid them. The development strategy of building homes near Harrow and Wealdstone transport hubs appears to presume that people will utilise the transport hubs to commute to and from Harrow, yet it provides no attractions for residents within Harrow itself. Both Harrow Leisure Centre and Hatch End swimming pool are nearing the end of their functional lifespan and need to be replaced, but there is no funded plan in place for their replacement, nor have any potential new sites been pinpointed.

Several concerning issues surrounding healthcare have been identified in the consultation of the local plan (Regulation 18), and no meaningful solutions have been proposed. There is a capacity shortfall for GPs, and there is no current strategy to address this shortfall, especially considering the rising population. The Primary Care Strategy for Harrow (Harrow CCG 2018/19 – 2022/23) recognised that the borough has experienced a surge in demand due to an aging population and significant growth that will increase the borough's population by 20,000 people over the next eight years. The 2022-2030 Harrow Health and Wellbeing Strategy emphasizes the specific needs of people living in poverty, noting that "people in our poorest neighbourhoods die more than four years earlier than those in the wealthiest parts of Harrow." This is an additional area of concern due to the lack of GP capacity in these areas.

Data analysis has shown that deprivation levels in the borough range from low to very high, with an average deprivation score of 15.03, compared to the England average of 21.67. The strategy outlines specific challenges related to health inequalities, obesity, mental health, and social isolation in Harrow. The existing health infrastructure cannot support new housing developments without securing appropriate mitigation measures. While engagement between the Integrated Care Board (ICB) and the council continues to ensure new provisions on regeneration and new development sites, investment in expanding existing primary and secondary care is also crucial. In consultation with the Head of Public Health in Harrow, a clear evidence base for healthcare provision was identified, but there are service provision gaps, particularly in the central area of the borough, including within the Opportunity Area. There is a risk that further development in this area will exacerbate pressure on GPs as the population grows and ages.

The Local Economic Needs Assessment forecasts a shortfall in water supply and suggests demand-side measures such as retrofitting, water metering, and stricter building regulations. With no apparent strategy to tackle water scarcity, residents are expected to adjust their consumption accordingly.

The Local Economic Assessment's electricity report indicates that the electricity grid is facing considerable strain from high-density development and redevelopment. Consequently, residents in the vicinity of the Opportunity Area have been subject to numerous unplanned power outages. In 2024, there have already been at least five such incidents. The increasing population is likely to intensify these issues. Currently, there is no documented strategy to address this shortfall. These frequent power cuts will have detrimental and life-threatening effects on housebound residents and other people with disabilities who use equipment like home-based dialysis machines, breathing machines, suction machines, electric air mattresses/cushions, electric profile hospital beds, power wheelchairs, hoists, etc.

According to the council's data (New Harrow Local Plan - Infrastructure Delivery Plan, page 7), the population will decrease in every ward except for those within the opportunity area, which will see an increase over the next five years as follows: Marlborough will increase by 7,847; Greenhill will increase by 2,777; Headstone South will increase by 962; Harrow on the Hill will increase by 166, totalling 11,752 in five years, and up to 21,000 in 15 years. Given this data, it raises the question of why development would be concentrated in the Opportunity Area when it is already the most densely populated and struggling to meet the infrastructure demands of its current residents.

The New Harrow Local Plan - Infrastructure Delivery Plan generally indicates that funding for projects has not been sourced. Refer to the table: Harrow New Local Plan 2021-2041 - Infrastructure Delivery Plan (IDP) - Appendix 1 Infrastructure Schedule (as of 28 October 2024). This implies that the issue

of infrastructure remains unresolved. Residents demand adequate infrastructure to meet present and future needs.

8) Policy GR4: Building Heights

Policy GR3: Public Realm and Connecting Places

Are the Policies Sound? : No

The Plan indicates that tall buildings are permissible in the Opportunity Area. The criteria used to identify appropriate locations for tall buildings need to consider their proximity to transport hubs, existing low-rise areas, and location relative to town centres. The Harrow and Wealdstone Opportunity Area Tall Buildings Study, page 96, shows the highest composite scores for tall building suitability were for sites adjacent to Harrow on the Hill Station and Harrow and Wealdstone Station. However, 12-storey buildings have been designated for sites behind these stations, while the Tesco site, with a lower composite score, has been allocated 15 storeys. This site is not in the Town Centre, lies close to a low-rise suburban area outside the Opportunity Area, is not near a green space larger than 2 hectares, is farther from the train stations, has a relatively low PTAL, and is near one outlier tall building. The reason for this discrepancy is unclear.

The Council's Tall Buildings Study identifies the Station Road sub-area as unsuitable for tall buildings, yet the council permits buildings up to 18 storeys without clear justification. The Harrow and Wealdstone Opportunity Area Tall Buildings Study gives Harrow Square as an example of an unsuitable site for tall buildings which create a wind tunnel and poor public realm amenities. Harrow and Wealdstone Heights in Wealdstone are also cited as a poor example of tall buildings. Given these past mistakes, is the council not doing the same by allowing tall buildings in areas they deem to be unsuitable?

The council also claims to be retaining the human scale of Station Road, but the proposals are contradictory. Residents have expressed a desire for a maximum building height of 7 stories, in line with the study's findings.

The method for determining these heights is not transparent, seeming to reflect developer requests rather than strategic planning. The Council has not considered comments provided by residents in the Regulation 18 consultation.

The Council needs to re-assess why the Tesco site is zoned for tall buildings.

9) Policy GR12: Site Allocations

Is the Policy Sound? : No

The housing allocation for sites on Station Road has been significantly increased: the Tesco site allocation rose from 14 to 500, and the Civic Centre from 300 to 1139 compared to allocations in the 2013 Local Plan. These changes appear to be more driven by developer needs than by actual capacity calculations, suggesting a target-driven 'anything goes' approach, particularly in the Opportunity Area. The Tesco Station Road site, (designated as site-OA7), lies within a protected view area, is not located in the Town Centre, has a Public Transport Accessibility Level (PTAL) of 3-5, and is adjacent to a low-rise area outside the Opportunity Area. It directly backs onto a residential area not within the Opportunity Area, raising questions about its suitability for high-density development of up to 500 flats. It is proposed to reassess whether such a high-density allocation for the Tesco and Civic Centre sites aligns with the best interests of the residents.

Furthermore, Rosen House runs along the southwest red line boundary of the Tesco site, directly adjacent to the proposed development, and consists of 4 storeys, a scale that fits in with the locality. The proposed development site bounds the site of Rosen House not only to the side but also to the back. Rosen House is essentially engulfed by the development site just like a piece of cheese in the mouth of a giant. A development such as this one causes huge pressure and stress on the residents in our later years having made what we expected to be our final house move and looking forward to enjoying retirement.

As stated above, the Harrow Council needs to re-assess why the Tesco site is zoned for tall buildings.

10) Policy HO9: Large scale purpose-built and conversions for shared living

Policy HO10: Housing with shared facilities (Houses in Multiple Occupation)

Are the Policies Sound? : No

There is a general agreement on the lack of Social Rent and truly affordable family homes for purchase. Recent data indicates that Harrow Council initiated only one affordable home between April 2023 and March 2024, despite the construction of thousands of new flats in the Opportunity Area. Therefore, should the Council not enforce stricter regulations on the number of Build-to-Rent sites, large-scale purpose-built and building conversions for shared living, since they are not obligated to provide affordable housing?

Moreover, it appears inequitable for the council to limit large-scale purpose-built and conversions for shared living, as well as Build-to-Rent developments, solely to the Opportunity Area, especially when it is the most densely populated area in the borough.

Proposed Amendment: Permit large-scale purpose-built and conversions for shared living, as well as Build-to-Rent developments, throughout the Borough, particularly near train stations. With ten train

stations in the borough, situating these developments near them could alleviate the strain on the Opportunity Area.

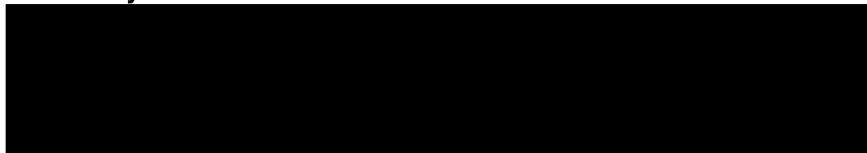
The range of development proposed in this local plan has breached our human rights to enjoy our property peacefully (the Human Rights Act, Article 1), might put us in danger or affect our life expectancy (Article 2). Our physical and mental health will be severely affected by the pollution (air, noise, and vibration) produced during and after the construction of these tall buildings, the negative visual impact caused by the excessive scale, height, and massing of the development, reduction in day/sunlight and poor circulation of air and breeze as Rosen House will be engulfed by many tall buildings, problems of overlooking and privacy, over-crowding environment with excessive traffic and problem of road safety, potential decrease in TV and mobile phone signals, reduced production of the solar panels, and potential increases in crime rate and antisocial behaviour commonly occurred in a densely populated area.

We urge the Harrow Council to amend the proposed local plan to “Putting Residents First”.

We would like to sign up for the mailing list related to the development of the local plan and participate in the hearing sessions.

Thank you

Dr. Sidney Chu



- Wendy Ebrahim
- Veena Shah
- Hansakumari Solanki
- Indumati Solanki
- Manjula Thakrar
- Jitendra Kamdar
- Chandrika Kamdar
- Mary Warner
- Arundathie Senanayake
- Jaindrabala Gandhi

Kantilal Vasu

Lalita Vasu

Harsida Shah

Vinodkumar Shah

Jayantilal Shah

Sushila Shah

Suresh Shah

Bhikhubhai Solanki

Kokila Solanki

Shetna Withana

Galip Nouman

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