

LONDON BOROUGH OF HARROW

COUNCIL MEETING -

16 July 2020

QUESTIONS WITH NOTICE

A period of up to 15 minutes is allowed for the asking of written questions by members of the public or a Member of the Executive or the Chair of any Committee.

Questioner: Sue Green

Asked of: Councillor Graham Henson (Portfolio Holder for Strategy, Partnerships, Devolution & Customer Services)

Question 1:

"I would like to ask a question at the Council meeting on 16/7/20 regarding the development of 265 The Ridgeway.

Several months back I wrote to Graham Henson, Labour Leader of the Council regarding this issue and received an automatic response that he was 'on holiday'. I assume he is back now but I have had nothing from him since then.

I wrote to the Deputy Leader Cllr Ferry who has not responded. I wrote to the Mayor and the response was he didn't answer questions. I wrote to Adam Swersky, my local Councillor, and had a two line generic reply.

I wrote to Kairul Marikar, my local Councillor and had a four word response that "my concerns are noted!"

I wrote to Christine Robson, my local Councillor and have had NO response. I wrote to 53 Councillors and the only one to contact me is Conservative Cllr Marilyn Ashton.

My Question is:-

As this reluctance to respond to a residents concerns seems to be uniform among the whole of the Labour Council could they confirm this development plan has not already been decided and rubber stamped, contrary to what the Council is saying to Harrow public at large? "

Questioner: Mike Williams

Asked of: Councillor Graham Henson (Portfolio Holder for Strategy, Partnerships, Devolution & Customer Services)

Question 2:

“Does the council share the concerns of the vast majority of local residents that the proposed development at the Ridgeway is over sized, over intensive and plain too high and is totally driven by the desire of the developers to maximise their profit to the detriment of the community”

Questioner: Sandra Cooley

Asked of: Councillor Graham Henson (Portfolio Holder for Strategy, Partnerships, Devolution & Customer Services)

Question 3:

“On behalf of myself and many other very concerned people in our area, I would like to say that although there is many signatures on the petition, and that number is still growing due to people only just finding out about the situation, it does not represent the full number of people who object and are outraged at the proposed removal of two vital services in our community. Many cannot access the Internet, are elderly or still shielding and vulnerable they are extremely concerned about having to take a long bus ride there and back to Belmont surgery and not having the care and support that H. H. S. Provides. It is not just a plant sale! We cannot due to covid-19 be present at the meeting or all join on Google teams, but as residents and council tax payers not entitled to have a say in OUR needs for OUR community, a need that benefits many, not a few houses and a car park, we have many being built locally. We ask are Harrow people not important anymore, does community mean nothing?!!!!!!”

Questioner: Siobhan Rosario

Asked of: Councillor Keith Ferry (Portfolio Holder for Regeneration, Planning and Employment)

Question 4:

“As we are in the midst of the covid pandemic, and in light of the disgraceful way elderly residents of care homes have been treated in the past 4 to 5 months, does the council want to be seen to ignore the needs of the Kent Care Home for the elderly, as their local doctors surgery is to be developed into a housing project with a car park to be built on the site next door? Has any consideration been given to the elderly residents regarding the noise and disruption levels to be inflicted on them during the proposal demolition and build, and also the change of use where what was a quite area, will now be initially vacant, subject to fly-tipping and anti-social behaviour and ultimately noisy at all times of the day and night from the proposed car park?”

Questioner: Lucy Halliday

Asked of: Councillor Keith Ferry (Portfolio Holder for
Regeneration, Planning and Employment)

Question 5:

“Would you agree that you always answer questions of the cabinet based on facts?”

Questioner: Jonathan Preiss

Asked of: Councillor Adam Swersky (Portfolio Holder for Finance and Resources)

Question 6:

“The deeply controversial proposal for high-density, high-rise development currently under consideration for 265 The Ridgeway would require the removal of an important and precious covenant which was put in place to ensure that the site was kept for limited D1 use only.

Given that a protracted process has already taken place, involving extensive and repeated contact between the developers and the Council, it regrettably appears to be the case that the Council has not thus far pre-emptively ruled out a change of use, and the developers clearly appear to be of the view that they have a realistic chance of overturning the covenant and the site's D1 status.

But the actual process by which such a change of use might be granted by the Council seems to be opaque and lacking in democratic accountability.

In response to a question at the last cabinet meeting Cllr Ferry said that – were an application for change of use to be received – “that would have to be considered by officers in the Corporate Estates department and they would make a recommendation to cabinet.”

From this it is unclear whether it would then become simply an executive decision, or whether it would be put to a vote in the Cabinet or other committee. It is also unclear whether the date of such a decision would be published in the Key Decision Schedule, and whether representations would be taken from any other body or individual than Corporate Estates.

The voters of Harrow deserve a full and clear answer: What is the democratically accountable process by which any decision on the covenant would be taken, and where does the buck stop?”