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Report on Harlesden Neighbourhood Plan 2018-2033

An Examination undertaken for the London Borough of Brent with the support of the Old Oak and Park Royal Development Corporation and the Harlesden Neighbourhood Forum on the May 2018 submission version of the Plan.

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Date of Report: 14 February 2019

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Main Findings - Executive Summary

From my examination of the Harlesden Neighbourhood Plan (the Plan/HNP) and its supporting documentation including the representations made, I have concluded that subject to the policy modifications set out in this report, the Plan meets the Basic Conditions.

I have also concluded that:

- the Plan has been prepared and submitted for examination by a qualifying body – the Harlesden Neighbourhood Forum (HNF);
- the Plan has been prepared for an area properly designated – see Appendix B of the Neighbourhood Plan;
- the Plan specifies the period to which it is to take effect – 2018 - 2033; and
- the policies relate to the development and use of land for a designated neighbourhood area.

I recommend that the Plan, once modified, proceeds to Referendum on the basis that it has met all the relevant legal requirements.

I have considered whether the referendum area should extend beyond the designated area to which the Plan relates and have concluded that it should not.

1. Introduction and Background

The Harlesden Neighbourhood Plan 2018 – 2033

- 1.1 Harlesden lies in the Borough of Brent, to the north-west of London. I saw on my visit that the Plan area includes Harlesden town centre, which appears to be a lively and relatively thriving retail and commercial area (designated as a District Centre in the London Plan). The Victorian roots of the locality are clearly evident in much of the architecture, for example in the High Street and there is evidence of some environmental improvements having been undertaken recently. I note that much of the town centre falls within the Harlesden Conservation Area. Nevertheless, there are also examples of town centre buildings in a poor state of repair and I agree with the observation in paragraph 1.4 of the HNP which states that Harlesden ‘continues to display characteristics of an inner-city area that has seen better times’.
- 1.2 Elsewhere the HNP area is mostly residential in character, although there are a few small employment sites, notably in the vicinity of Willesden Junction station (including the bus depot). Roundwood Park lies to the

north of the Plan area and at about 15ha in size it provides an important recreational facility for the wider community.

- 1.3 It is important to note the context within which the HNP is being prepared because it is likely that there will be significant change in terms of development and regeneration at Old Oak Common, which lies to the south of Harlesden. The southern part of the HNP area, including Willesden Junction station and the bus depot, falls within the aegis of the Old Oak and Park Royal Development Corporation (OPDC). Consultation has been undertaken on a Local Plan (LP) for Old Oak and Park Royal and I have been told that the examination into that LP has commenced with Hearing sessions scheduled to start in April 2019. Further consideration of the planning context is given in paragraph 2.1.

The Independent Examiner

- 1.4 As the Plan has now reached the examination stage, I have been appointed as the examiner of the HNP by the Council of the London Borough of Brent (LBB), with the support of OPDC and the HNF - the qualifying Body.
- 1.5 I am a chartered town planner and former government Planning Inspector, with extensive experience in the preparation and examination of development plans and other planning policy documents. I am an independent examiner, and do not have an interest in any of the land that may be affected by the draft Plan.

The Scope of the Examination

- 1.6 As the independent examiner I am required to produce this report and recommend either:
- (a) that the neighbourhood plan is submitted to a referendum without changes; or
 - (b) that modifications are made and that the modified neighbourhood plan is submitted to a referendum; or
 - (c) that the neighbourhood plan does not proceed to a referendum on the basis that it does not meet the necessary legal requirements.
- 1.7 The scope of the examination is set out in Paragraph 8(1) of Schedule 4B to the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended)('the 1990 Act'). The examiner must consider:
- Whether the Plan meets the Basic Conditions;

- Whether the Plan complies with provisions under s.38A and s.38B of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (as amended) ('the 2004 Act'). These are:
 - it has been prepared and submitted for examination by a qualifying body, for an area that has been properly designated by the local planning authority;
 - it sets out policies in relation to the development and use of land;
 - it specifies the period during which it has effect;
 - it does not include provisions and policies for 'excluded development';
 - it is the only neighbourhood plan for the area and does not relate to land outside the designated neighbourhood area;
 - whether the referendum boundary should be extended beyond the designated area, should the Plan proceed to referendum; and
- Such matters as prescribed in the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012 (as amended)('the 2012 Regulations').

1.8 I have considered only matters that fall within Paragraph 8(1) of Schedule 4B to the 1990 Act, with one exception. That is the requirement that the Plan is compatible with the Human Rights Convention.

The Basic Conditions

- 1.9 The 'Basic Conditions' are set out in Paragraph 8(2) of Schedule 4B to the 1990 Act. In order to meet the Basic Conditions, the neighbourhood plan must:
- Have regard to national policies and advice contained in guidance issued by the Secretary of State;
 - Contribute to the achievement of sustainable development;
 - Be in general conformity with the strategic policies of the development plan for the area;
 - Be compatible with and not breach European Union (EU) obligations; and
 - Meet prescribed conditions and comply with prescribed matters.

- 1.10 Regulation 32 and Schedule 2 to the 2012 Regulations prescribes a further Basic Condition for a neighbourhood plan. This requires that the making of the neighbourhood development plan does not breach the requirements of Chapter 8 of Part 6 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017¹.

2. Approach to the Examination

Planning Policy Context

- 2.1 The planning policy framework for this part of the LBB, not including documents relating to excluded minerals and waste development, is the Brent Local Plan (which consists of a number of documents including the Core Strategy of July 2010) and the London Plan of 2016 (consolidated with alterations). A small part of the HNP area (the bus depot) lies within the London Borough of Ealing and other small pockets of land at Willesden Junction station lie within the London Borough of Hammersmith and Fulham and the London Borough of Brent. These locations fall within the remit of the OPDC which, since April 2015, is the local planning authority in respect of these areas of land. The Hearing sessions into the OPDC Local Plan are scheduled to start in April 2019.
- 2.2 Also relevant are the Review of the London Plan (Hearing sessions scheduled for January – May 2019) and the preparation of the Brent Local Plan (Hearing sessions anticipated in Winter 2019). The potential changes to the wider planning policy framework in the area are not a reason for delaying progress on the HNP but the HNF should remain vigilant and continue to monitor the situation in order to be aware of any implications that the changes may have for the HNP (see paragraph 4.39 on Monitoring).
- 2.3 The planning policy for England is set out principally in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). The Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) offers guidance on how this policy should be implemented. A revised NPPF was published on 24 July 2018, replacing the previous NPPF 2012. The transitional arrangements for local plans and neighbourhood plans are set out in paragraph 214 of the NPPF 2018, which provides 'The policies in the previous Framework will apply for the purpose of examining plans, where those plans are submitted on or before 24 January 2019'. A footnote clarifies that for neighbourhood plans, 'submission' in this context means where a qualifying body submits a plan to the local planning authority under Regulation 15 of the 2012 Regulations. The HNP was submitted to LBB in May 2018. Thus, it is the policies in the previous NPPF that are

¹ This revised Basic Condition came into force on 28 December 2018 through the Conservation of Habitats and Species and Planning (Various Amendments) (England and Wales) Regulations 2018.

applied to this examination and all references in this report are to the March 2012 NPPF and its accompanying PPG.

- 2.4 PPG makes it clear that whilst a draft NP is not tested against the policies in an emerging local plan, the reasoning and evidence informing the local plan process are likely to be relevant to the consideration of the Basic Conditions against which a NP is tested². Paragraph 184 of the NPPF also states that 'the ambition of the neighbourhood should be aligned with the strategic needs and priorities of the wider area'. Therefore, it would be appropriate for due cognisance to be given to changes that are being proposed to the Development Plan for the area (as referred to in paragraphs 2.1 and 2.2 above).

Submitted Documents

- 2.5 I have considered all policy, guidance and other reference documents I consider relevant to the examination, including those submitted which comprise:

- the draft Harlesden Neighbourhood Plan 2018-2033 (May 2018);
- the Map in Appendix B of the Plan which identifies the area to which the proposed Neighbourhood Development Plan relates;
- the undated Consultation Statement;
- the undated Basic Conditions Statement;
- all the representations that have been made in accordance with the Regulation 16 consultation;
- the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Screening Opinion and Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) Screening Opinion prepared by the LBB and OPDC; and
- the requests for additional clarification sought in my letter of 20 December 2018 and the responses on 4 and 7 January 2019 provided by the HNF and LBB, which are available on the LBB website³.

Site Visit

- 2.6 I made an unaccompanied site visit to the Neighbourhood Plan Area on 7 January 2019 to familiarise myself with the locality, and visit relevant sites and areas referenced in the Plan and evidential documents.

Written Representations with or without Public Hearing

- 2.7 This examination has been dealt with by written representations. I considered hearing sessions to be unnecessary as the consultation responses clearly articulated the objections to the Plan and presented

² Paragraph 8 of Schedule 4B to the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended).

³ View at: <https://www.brent.gov.uk/services-for-residents/planning-and-building-control/planning-policy/neighbourhood-planning/harlesden-neighbourhood-plan/>

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arguments for and against the Plan's suitability to proceed to a referendum. There were no formal requests for a hearing to be held.

Modifications

- 2.8 Where necessary, I have recommended modifications to the Plan (**PMs**) in this report in order that it meets the Basic Conditions and other legal requirements. For ease of reference, I have listed these modifications separately in the Appendix.

3. Procedural Compliance and Human Rights

Qualifying Body and Neighbourhood Plan Area

- 3.1 The HNP has been prepared and submitted under Regulation 15 by the HNF, which is a qualifying body. The constituent parts of the Neighbourhood Plan Area were designated by the LBB on 28 September 2015 and by the OPDC (relating to land for which it is the local planning authority) on 26 November 2015.
- 3.2 It is the only neighbourhood plan for Harlesden and does not relate to land outside the designated Neighbourhood Plan Area.

Plan Period

- 3.3 The Plan specifies clearly the period to which it is to take effect, which is from 2018 to 2033.

Neighbourhood Plan Preparation and Consultation

- 3.4 The Statement of Consultation sets out the consultation that has taken place on the HNP throughout its preparation and explains the engagement, collaboration and consultation that has been organised. For example, over 7,000 households have received 'flyers'; about 100 interested parties are on the mailing list; a significant number of meetings and workshops have been held; two street consultation stalls have been set up; and surveys have been undertaken. The process, which appears to have been thorough, is well documented and I consider that the opportunity for the local community, local businesses and external stakeholders to comment was available at both the Regulation 14 stage and the Regulation 16 stage.
- 3.5 Overall, I am satisfied that all the relevant statutory requirements in the 2012 Regulations have been met. I am content that in all respects the approach taken towards the preparation of the HNP and the involvement of interested parties in consultation has been conducted through a

transparent, fair and inclusive process, paying due regard to the relevant national advice on plan preparation and engagement.

Development and Use of Land

- 3.6 The Plan sets out policies in relation to the development and use of land in accordance with s.38A of the 2004 Act.

Excluded Development

- 3.7 The Plan does not include provisions and policies for 'excluded development'.

Human Rights

- 3.8 The LBB and OPDC appear satisfied that the Plan does not breach Human Rights (within the meaning of the Human Rights Act 1998), and from my independent assessment I see no reason to disagree.

4. Compliance with the Basic Conditions

EU Obligations

- 4.1 The Neighbourhood Plan was screened for SEA by the LBB and OPDC, and it was found to be unnecessary to undertake SEA. Having read the Strategic Environmental Assessment Screening Opinion (December 2018), I support this conclusion. The HNP was further screened for HRA, which also was not triggered. The Neighbourhood Plan Area is not in close proximity to a European designated nature site.
- 4.2 Natural England and other interested parties expressed no objections to these conclusions and from my independent assessment of these matters, I have no reason to disagree.

Main Issues

- 4.3 I have approached the assessment of whether or not the HNP complies with the Basic Conditions under two main headings:
- general issues of compliance of the HNP, as a whole; and
 - specific issues of compliance of the HNP policies.
- 4.4 In particular I have considered whether or not the HNP complies with the Basic Conditions, particularly in terms of its relationship to national policy and guidance, the achievement of sustainable development and general conformity with the adopted strategic Development Plan policies.

General Issues of Compliance of the NP

National Policy, Sustainable Development and the Development Plan

- 4.5 The policies in the HNP are set out under nine main headings: Sustainable Development; Housing; Community Facilities; Environment and Open Space; Local Economy; Transport and Access; Site Allocations; Design Principles; and Delivering the HNP. The accompanying Basic Conditions Statement succinctly explains how the HNP policies align with national policy and advice.
- 4.6 It would be appropriate to up-date the references to other relevant development plan documents, for example as set out in Chapter 2 (page 4). Similarly, the plans in the document should also be re-assessed – for example I am told that Figure 25 is out-of-date⁴. It is clear that the HNF is aware of this situation⁵ and intends to incorporate the necessary up-dates throughout the HNP. I therefore provide in recommendation **PM1** a generic modification, to ensure that the necessary factual updates can be incorporated into the HNP at the time when the Plan might proceed to a referendum (and if successful, be made).
- 4.7 The HNP establishes the Vision and Objectives for the area (Chapter 3) and includes a range of ‘community aspirations’ that support the policies (see paragraph 4.42 below). From my reading of the consultation responses submitted, the objectives clearly reflect the ambitions of the local community.
- 4.8 The need to achieve sustainable development is embedded throughout the HNP but it is helpful to emphasise the importance of this objective and policy G1 establishes the policy guidance that, for example, prospective developers should follow. I am satisfied that all three dimensions of sustainable development (economic, social and environmental) have been taken into account in the formulation of the policies. Subject to the detailed comments on individual policies, that I set out below, I conclude that the HNP has had proper regard to national policy and guidance.
- 4.9 In terms of the Development Plans, it is clear that the HNP has been prepared in consultation with the appropriate planning officers and that, with the exceptions that I address in the following paragraphs, it can be concluded that the HNP is in general conformity with the various LP policies.

⁴ OPDC response.

⁵ See, for example, the fourth paragraph of the letter to the Inspector dated 14 December 2018. View at: <https://www.brent.gov.uk/services-for-residents/planning-and-building-control/planning-policy/neighbourhood-planning/harlesden-neighbourhood-plan/>

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- 4.10 I am satisfied that the HNP provides an appropriate framework that will facilitate the achievement of the stated objectives.
- 4.11 Subject to the modifications that I recommend below, I conclude that the HNP meets the Basic Conditions. I also consider that the policies (as amended) are supported by suitable evidence, are sufficiently clear and unambiguous and that they can be applied consistently and with confidence.

Specific Issues of compliance of the NP's Policies

Housing

- 4.12 Policy H1 lists the four site allocations and three potential development sites. However, the policy and supporting text makes no reference to the fact that there is much more information about these sites (including plans) in Chapter 11 (there is only a short reference to them at the bottom of the policy). In the interests of clarity⁶, a new paragraph should be inserted above policy H1 which advises the reader of Figure 6 (site location plan) and the existence of Chapter 11 (**PM2**). For ease of reference policy H1 should also include the indicative housing capacities of the sites (**PM3**). With these modifications, policy H1 meets the Basic Conditions.
- 4.13 Policy H2 relates to housing density but, following my question to the HNF⁷, it is clear that there was an error with regard to the wording of the policy. The HNF has provided the correct wording, which removes uncertainty and adds clarity, and on that basis the policy should be modified as set out in **PM4**.
- 4.14 Bearing in mind the need for housing in the locality, the ambition to ensure that there is no loss of housing (unless being replaced) is valid. However, the HNP makes an exception to this requirement in relation to the ground floor of units in Station Road, some of which have been converted to residential use. I saw that this is part of Harlesden town centre and, that as such, it is important that active frontages are retained at ground floor level. The loss of residential uses in such circumstances would be justified and therefore policy H3 is appropriate and meets the Basic Conditions.

Community Facilities

- 4.15 The provision of adequate and appropriate community space is a valid ambition. The Harlesden Plaza site (which is allocated for redevelopment

⁶ PPG Reference ID: 41-041-20140306.

⁷ Letter dated 20 December 2018.

in policy SA 1) is in a relatively central location and would appear to be of a size that, if redeveloped, could accommodate community facilities. Policy CF1 is therefore justified and meets the Basic Conditions.

Environment and Open Space

- 4.16 It is right that efforts should be made to seek open space provision in areas where there is currently a deficiency. I am satisfied Policy E1 meets the Basic Conditions.
- 4.17 Policy E2 seeks to secure the provision of food growing space (which appears to be in very short supply in the locality). This reflects a sustainable approach towards more self-sufficiency and in principle should be supported.
- 4.18 Safe play provision should be an important component in the life of the community and the HNF is correct in seeking to secure the provision of new play areas in localities that are currently deficient in local open space. Policy E3 is therefore justified and meets the Basic Conditions.
- 4.19 Policy E4 identifies non-designated heritage assets which the HNF considers should be afforded a level of protection. I have no evidence to suggest that any of the buildings/features should not be on the list and the policy meets the Basic Conditions.
- 4.20 I saw on my visit that there is no civic space in Harlesden town centre and that the busy network of roads can make social interaction uncomfortable. Harlesden is not unique in this respect, but it is clearly an ambition of the local community to make such provision. Policy E5 seeks to secure a 'town square' within a redevelopment at Harlesden Plaza and meets the Basic Conditions.
- 4.21 In order to secure a sense of arrival at Harlesden, policy E6 seeks to secure 'gateways' along the main routes into the town centre. However, there is no clear indication of what expectations exactly the HNF have in terms of what constitutes a 'gateway'. A prospective developer would need a clearer understanding of what might be required and therefore it is recommended that an explanation of the term 'gateway' is included in the Glossary (**PM5**) in order to meet the Basic Conditions.
- 4.22 The provision of public art on larger sites is appropriate and will contribute towards achieving high quality places in accordance with the advice in NPPF Chapter 7. I am therefore satisfied that policy E7 meets the Basic Conditions.

- 4.23 The title of policy E8 refers to tree 'protection' but the contents of the policy relate to tree 'provision'. The title should therefore be corrected (**PM6**).
- 4.24 It is important that the optimum use of land is secured and one way of achieving this is through the provision of tall buildings. Policy E9 supports the development of appropriate tall buildings at Willesden Junction station, but restricts any redevelopment at the Harlesden Plaza site to no more than 4 storeys. Having visited the area, including around the vicinity of the railway station, I agree that redevelopment of the Plaza site should not have an unacceptable visual impact, particularly bearing in mind that the site abuts the Harlesden Conservation Area. However, I consider that the policy, as currently worded, is too restrictive in relation to Harlesden Plaza and that opportunities for a more effective, viable and sustainable use of the site should not be ruled out at the start. Therefore, I recommend in **PM7** that the policy be modified to make it clear that appropriately designed buildings of over four storeys in height may be supported, but only if they contribute favourably towards Harlesden's historic character and respond appropriately to the existing urban design characteristics. The recommendation also includes the insertion of a reference to 'character and appearance' in the first paragraph of the policy, in the interests of clarity. With these amendments, I consider policy E9 will meet the Basic Conditions.

Local Economy

- 4.25 Two of the main issues identified by the HNF relate to employment need and whether or not existing employment sites should be protected. Paragraph 9.6 of the HNP confirms that there will be very significant employment growth of about 65,000 jobs, immediately to the south of Harlesden (Old Oak and Park Royal). On that basis, there would appear to be no justification for identifying additional employment land.
- 4.26 In terms of local employment sites, policy LE1 advises that the redevelopment of such sites for alternative uses would be acceptable. However, the advice in paragraph 9.10 states that 'the loss of employment sites should be permitted only if any existing businesses that wish to remain in the area are successfully relocated'. This latter element of advice is not encapsulated within the policy. Similarly, the policy should be strengthened, firstly to confirm that satisfactory viability evidence must be submitted where an alternative use to employment is being proposed; and secondly, to make it clear that there should be appropriate evidence to demonstrate that there is no reasonable prospect of the premises being used for another employment purpose. Therefore, in the interests of accuracy and clarity, **PM8** is recommended in order to meet the Basic Conditions.

4.27 Bearing in mind that much of the town centre falls within the Harlesden Conservation Area, the HNF is right to seek the improvement of shopfronts, and policy LE2 appropriately sets out the approach to be taken. Similarly, the support given in policy LE3 for the provision of new retail or other town centre uses in Harlesden town centre is justified. With regard to the reference to 'connecting into Old Oak High Street' I am satisfied that the justification for this improved connection is based on evidence in the OPDC Retail and Leisure Needs Study (2018). In the interests of clarity and certainty a plan showing the boundary of Harlesden town centre should be included in the HNF (in the vicinity of policy LE3) and I recommend **PM9** accordingly. With these amendments, the Basic Conditions will be met.

Transport and Access

4.28 Willesden Junction station appears to be an important transport hub but I agree that it would benefit from improved pedestrian and cycle access. I am satisfied that policy T1 is justified and meets the Basic Conditions.

4.29 Car parking is clearly an issue of concern to local residents and the retention of some parking spaces in the town centre, as proposed in policy T2, would appear to be justified. However, what is not clear is the justification for the figure of (a minimum of) 60 spaces to be retained. I have studied the Site Assessment Final Report (February 2018)⁸ and this refers to a minimum of 50 spaces⁹. However, in Appendix B of that Report there is a reference to about 170 spaces (under Harlesden Plaza Design and Viability). I am not satisfied that there is currently sufficient evidence to enable the inclusion of indicative parking provision. It is therefore recommended that policy T2 is amended to remove reference to a specific number of parking spaces (**PM10**). In this respect it is also necessary, in the interests of consistency, to modify paragraph 10.17 by the deletion of the word 'fewer' (as it applies to parking spaces). **PM11** is therefore recommended. Similar changes to policy SA 1 are referred to in paragraph 4.32 below. With these amendments, the Basic Conditions will be met.

4.30 As mentioned above in paragraph 4.28, improved access to Willesden Junction station is an important objective. Policies T3 and T4 seek to improve cycle and pedestrian provision between the station and the High Street as a priority. Both of these are appropriate proposals and improvements elsewhere are not excluded.

⁸ Available on HNF web site.

⁹ Under Site H1 on page 17 and in Assessment on page A1.

Site Allocations

- 4.31 Policy SA 1 relates to redevelopment at Harlesden Plaza and brings together a number of other policies in the HNP, for example relating to land uses and design. I agree with the HNF that this ambitious proposal, which incorporates a number of land uses, would be an important element in the regeneration of the town centre. In terms of the number of storeys, I have already recommended in PM7 that the HNP be modified to make policy E9 more flexible (see paragraph 4.24 above). In the same vein, in the interests of consistency, policy SA 1 should be modified to clarify the position regarding the height of proposed buildings (**PM12**).
- 4.32 Car parking is an important factor to consider but I have already concluded (see paragraph 4.29 above) that there is currently insufficient evidence to justify including in the HNP a reference to a specific parking space number (currently, the policy refers to the retention of at least 60 parking spaces at Harlesden Plaza). In the interests of clarity and consistency **PM13** is therefore recommended.
- 4.33 Concerns have been expressed regarding the capacity of the water network in the area but I have seen no evidence that the issue could not be satisfactorily resolved and, in any event, the HNP clearly identifies it as a matter to be addressed. It would be appropriate, however, to include reference in the supporting text to the requirement for a detailed drainage strategy to be submitted with any planning application at Harlesden Plaza (**PM14**).
- 4.34 I conclude that policy SA 1, if modified as proposed, will meet the Basic Conditions.
- 4.35 I understand that the redevelopment of the Salvation Army Hall is being promoted by themselves and I saw on my visit that it lies on the edge of the town centre. With an indicative housing capacity of 31 dwellings, there is no reason to doubt the appropriateness of policy SA 2 which meets the Basic Conditions. Similarly, no significant issues have been raised with regard to the allocation at the former Willesden Ambulance Station. Accordingly, I consider policy SA 3 also meets the Basic Conditions.
- 4.36 The site at Willesden Junction station (policy SA 4) would contribute significantly to residential and employment provision and it is identified for development in the draft OPDC Local Plan for implementation after 2038. However, the fact that the timescale is beyond the end of the current plan period should be referred to in the HNP and I recommend accordingly in **PM15**. Of particular importance to local residents is the need to ensure that improved pedestrian and cycle links would be provided, and these requirements are satisfactorily embodied within the policy. Paragraph 11.21 refers to potential water issues and therefore it would be

appropriate to require the submission of a detailed drainage strategy with any planning application for the site (**PM16**) in order to meet the Basic Conditions.

Design Principles

4.37 It is important to local residents that development in the town centre will enhance and celebrate the local character and history of the area. Consequently, policy DP1 establishes the design principles that all development should follow, for example in terms of materials, height and layout. The NPPF confirms that good design is a key aspect of sustainable development¹⁰ and an important consideration in the planning process. Bearing in mind the modifications regarding the height of buildings at Harlesden Plaza that I have already proposed (see paragraphs 4.24 and 4.31) it is necessary to amend policy DP1 and **PM17** is recommended accordingly. On that basis, I am satisfied that policy DP1 will meet the Basic Conditions.

Delivering the Neighbourhood Plan

4.38 Policy D1 sets out the priorities of the community in terms of the use of Neighbourhood CIL funds and I note that at the top of the list are pedestrian and cycle improvements between the station and the town centre. There is no reason to challenge the priorities set out in the policy and I am content policy D1 meets the Basic Conditions.

Other Matters – Monitoring and Presentation

4.39 The planning policy framework for the area is changing and it is important that the policies of the local community remain relevant and consistent with those published elsewhere. To that end, I consider that the HNP should include a reference to confirm that the HNF will monitor the implementation of the HNP and its continuing compatibility with the wider planning framework. **PM18** is therefore recommended.

4.40 A number of suggestions have been made by respondents with regard to the clarity of maps and the definitions in the Glossary. I do not consider these to be matters that threaten the adoption of the HNP but suggest that the HNF (perhaps in partnership with the LBB) considers how minor presentational improvements could be made to the document. It would be helpful to include the acronyms used in the document within the Glossary.

4.41 Requests were made to include specific requirements that development within the HNP area should conform with adopted/proposed policies in

¹⁰ NPPF (2012) Chapter 7.

higher level plans. However, this is not necessary as a decision-maker should take into account all elements of the development plan.

Community Aspirations

4.42 The HNP includes a number of 'Community Aspirations'. These are described in paragraph 1.13 of the HNP as 'statements of intent'. I have no doubt that they represent the genuine desires of local people and I recognise it is beyond my purview to determine what the aspirations of the community should be. However, having enjoyed the privilege of reading the Plan in some detail, in the interest of being helpful I do suggest below a number of minor continuity amendments for the HNF to consider. These are not '**PMs**' as described in paragraph 2.8 above and have no legal status¹¹:

- (i) Community Aspiration 4: I suggest this should be clarified because the HNF is not able to 'nominate' Assets of Community Value. Perhaps the first line could read 'The Forum will seek to secure the designation of the following Assets of Community Value:'?
- (ii) Community Aspiration 5: The importance of Roundwood Park is clear, and improvements may be justified, but the park and garden are statutorily registered and, therefore, I suggest that a reference to ensuring that the quality of the area is retained in any improvements might be suitably included in this Aspiration.
- (iii) Community Aspiration 7: In relation to the bus depot site, I suggest that the intention might be clearer if the last sentence could end '... subject to the depot being appropriately relocated with no loss of capacity'.
- (iv) Community Aspiration 9: This relates to retaining and strengthening the viability of the town centre. I consider that its intent could be strengthened and suggest that the end of the last sentence is revised to read: '... ensure that Harlesden captures trade from the new development at Old Oak and that there is no adverse impact upon trade in Harlesden town centre'.

¹¹ The suggested amendments in paragraph 4.42 do not represent modifications for the purposes of paragraph 10(2)(b) of Schedule 4B to the 1990 Act.

5. Conclusions

Summary

- 5.1 The Harlesden Neighbourhood Plan has been duly prepared in compliance with the procedural requirements. My examination has investigated whether the Plan meets the Basic Conditions and other legal requirements for neighbourhood plans. I have had regard to all the responses made following consultation on the HNP, and the evidence documents submitted with it.
- 5.2 I have made recommendations to modify a number of policies and text to ensure the HNP meets the Basic Conditions and other legal requirements. I recommend that the Plan, once modified, proceeds to referendum.

The Referendum and its Area

- 5.3 I have considered whether or not the referendum area should be extended beyond the designated area to which the Plan relates. However, the HNP as modified has no policy or proposal which I consider would have a significant impact beyond the designated Neighbourhood Plan boundary, requiring the referendum to extend to areas beyond that boundary. I recommend that the boundary for the purposes of any future referendum on the Plan should be the boundary of the designated Neighbourhood Plan Area.

Overview

- 5.4 It is clear to me that significant effort has been made to reach this stage in the preparation of the HNP. It is encouraging that most of the consultation responses from individuals confirm that the HNF has worked effectively to ensure that the HNP truly reflects the ambitions of the local community. The HNP is well structured and clear and the HNF should be confident that, if made, the document will become an important element in the planning policy framework for the area.

David Hogger

Examiner

Appendix: Modifications

Deleted text is shown as ~~struck through~~ and additional text is **shown in bold**

Proposed modification number (PM)	Page no./ other reference	Modification
PM1	Throughout the HNP	<p>Update factual references throughout the HNP, primarily, but not exclusively, in Chapter 2, with regard to the Development Plan Framework for the locality at the time the HNP might proceed to a referendum (and if successful, be made). For example, in terms of the London Plan, the Brent Local Plan and the OPDC Local Plan and including up-dated references to the proposed development at Willesden Junction station. To this end the references to 600 dwellings at Willesden Junction, for example in paragraphs 2.29 and 11.18, should be deleted and be replaced by a reference to the on-going work to identify the potential residential capacity of the site.</p> <p>Plans and Figures within the HNP should be up-dated accordingly.</p> <p>Replace the reference to English Heritage (in the Glossary under 'Listed Building' with Historic England.</p> <p>Place the sub-title 'Walking' underneath policy T3 (page 71).</p>
PM2	Page 30	<p>Add new paragraph 6.22 to read: The following policy lists the site allocations and the potential development sites. The location of the sites is shown in Figure 6 and more detailed information about the sites is given in Chapter 11.</p>
PM3	Policy H1 Page 30	<p>In the first three bullet points include reference to the indicative number of dwellings proposed: Harlesden Plaza - 208 units; Salvation Army Hall – 31</p>

		units ; and former Willesden Ambulance Station – 8 units .
PM4	Policy H2 Page 33	Revise wording of policy to read: Density of new housing development should be optimised taking account of the development site's connectivity and accessibility and will be expected to be towards the upper end of the density ranges relevant to the location of the proposed housing site, subject to the proposals being acceptable in terms of local context and design. Density at Willesden Junction will be determined by in the OPDC's Local Plan.
PM5	Glossary (Relating to policy E6 on page 53)	Include the following definition of a 'Gateway' in the Glossary: A prominent and distinctive entry point into the Town Centre, made so by the layout, design, location, open space provision and features of the townscape, including vehicular, cycling and walking routes.
PM6	Policy E8 Page 55	Policy E8 Amend title of the policy to read: Tree protection and provision
PM7	Policy E9 and paragraph 8.32 Page 55	In the first paragraph of the policy insert the character and appearance of between <i>impact on</i> and <i>their surroundings</i> Replace second paragraph to read: Buildings of over four storeys may be supported if they contribute favourably towards retaining the historic character of Harlesden town centre and respond appropriately to the existing urban design characteristics. Delete last sentence of paragraph 8.32: Urban design assessments by Brent Council officers show that it should be possible to accommodate buildings of up

		to 4 storeys in the heart of the town centre on the Harlesden Plaza site (see site allocation 1).
PM8	Policy LE1 Page 58	Amend policy to read: Redevelopment of Local Employment sites for alternative use will be acceptable providing appropriate evidence is submitted to satisfactorily demonstrate that the current employment use is no longer viable and that there is no reasonable prospect of the site being used for another appropriate employment purpose ; or there are significant regeneration benefits for the site. If an existing business wishes to remain in the area it should be demonstrated
PM9	Page 63	Insert a Map of Harlesden Town Centre before policy LE3
PM10	Policy T2 Page 71	Replace policy to read: An element of public car parking will be provided in any development or redevelopment of the privately-operated car park site at Tavistock Road/Manor Park Road. The number of spaces to be provided will take into account the other proposed land uses on the site and will be determined in consultation with the London Borough of Brent. (Please see Chapter 11 policy SA 1)
PM11	Paragraph 10.17	Replace the word fewer with the word some.
PM12	Policy SA 1 Page 76	Modify first sentence of second paragraph by deleting ' and should not exceed 4 storeys above ground level. '
PM13	Policy SA 1 Page 76	Modify first sentence of the first paragraph to read: Development should include commercial on the ground floor, a justified amount of replacement car parking (minimum of 60 spaces), community space'

PM14	Policy SA 1 Page 76	Add a third paragraph to read: It should be clearly demonstrated that the water supply and drainage requirements of any redevelopment scheme have been appropriately addressed.
PM15	Paragraph 11.18 Page 81	Add a new paragraph after 11.18 to read: It is anticipated that the redevelopment of this site will not commence before 2038, although earlier development of the site will be supported.
PM16	Policy SA 4 Page 81	Add a third paragraph to read: It should be clearly demonstrated that the water supply and drainage requirements of any redevelopment scheme have been appropriately addressed.
PM17	Policy DP1 Page 85	Modify the element of Policy DP1 entitled 'Height' to read: The height of buildings in the town centre should be appropriate to their setting and should contribute favourably towards retaining the historic character of Harlesden town centre and respond appropriately to the existing urban design characteristics.
PM18	Page 88	Add a new paragraph under a new sub-heading of Monitoring (below the Table on page 88) to read: In an area where there is likely to be significant change it is important that the adopted policies are appropriately monitored to ensure that any change in circumstances can be properly addressed. To that end the HNF will continue to act as guardians of the Plan and keep the

		content and implementation of the policies under review.
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