

Harlesden Neighbourhood Plan frequently asked questions

We know that people will have lots of questions about the Harlesden Neighbourhood Forum and the Harlesden Neighbourhood Plan.

The answers to most of these should be found within the Plan itself, but see below for some of the most frequently asked questions.

If you have a question that isn't included below, please get in touch with us by email at info@HarlesdenNeighbourhoodForum.com or via [Facebook](#) or [Twitter](#). You can also call 0208 9652561 and ask to speak to Megan. We are happy to meet you too.

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Q1 - What is the Harlesden Neighbourhood Plan?

A - Neighbourhood Plan is a document produced by local communities that have come together to form a Neighbourhood Forum. It lays out their requirements for the future development of their area, as well as aspirations that can go beyond planning itself. The Plan contains planning policies for local infrastructure (including housing, transport and community facilities), guidance for potential developers and ideas for potential community led projects. The Harlesden Neighbourhood Plan was developed by Harlesden Neighbourhood Forum with input of hundreds of local people and local businesses. If the Plan is made official through being supported at the forthcoming referendum, it will have legal force. This means Brent Council and the OPDC will use it to decide planning applications for the next 15 years. It will also provide many other opportunities for the community.

Q2– What is the referendum / ‘local vote’, and when is it?

A – The referendum is very important as it enables local residents to get behind their community and formally decide whether or not the Harlesden Neighbourhood Plan should be made an official document. It is only open to local residents, giving them control over future development. Voters will be asked if the local planning authorities should use the Plan to determine planning applications. The answers to choose will be ‘Yes’ or ‘No’. If the majority vote ‘yes’ the Plan will be made official.

**The vote will take place on Thursday 30th May 2019
at polling stations from 7am – 10pm.**

Anyone who is entitled to vote in local council elections can vote in the Harlesden referendum, providing you live within the [Harlesden boundary area](#) (see our website front page). If you’re not registered, you can do so [here](#). **The last date you can register to vote is 13th May.**

Thursday 30th May is within school holidays, so some people may need to vote by post – you can find more information about this [here](#).

This is a powerful way for the local community to influence the direction that Harlesden will take in future.

Q3 – Who is Harlesden Neighbourhood Forum?

A – Harlesden Neighbourhood Forum (HNF) is an independent community organisation with membership free and open to all who live and work the Harlesden area. It has a steering committee of local volunteers that is elected annually – the current chair is Rev Leao Neto, from Harlesden Methodist Church. HNF has benefited from the involvement and support of Crisis Brent (formerly Lift), the local arm of a national charity, although in 2019, HNF will become a charitable organisation in its own right.

Q4 – How was the boundary of the area determined, and can it be changed in future?

A – Neighbourhood planning guidance lists several things that should be considered when establishing a neighbourhood area. These include natural boundaries, the physical characteristics of a neighbourhood, and the area within which formal and informal networks of community-based groups operate. Neighbourhood forum areas cannot overlap and, in the case of Harlesden, there was an existing designated area – the Unity (Church End and Roundwood) Neighbourhood Forum. This meant that HNF could not extend any further north than it currently does. There are no immediate plans to try to change the neighbourhood area boundary, although this could be revisited in future.

Q5 – How were the priorities for the Harlesden Neighbourhood Plan determined, and how was the Plan developed?

A – As a community-led organisation, the priorities were set by Forum members during public events at the very start of the process. The ideas that came out of those early discussions were developed by the committee into a set of objectives that became the chapters of the Plan: – housing, community facilities, environment and open space, local economy, and transport and access. The chapters were then developed by working groups of committee members, HNF members and volunteers, and during accessible design workshops. The work was supported throughout by Ken Hullock, a local planning expert. In addition to day to day engagement with local people and businesses, the Plan has been through a formal examination by an independent expert. You can read about this [here](#).

Q6 – Why haven't I heard of HNF or the Plan before now?

A – The Harlesden Neighbourhood Plan area has a population of around 18,000 people and we recognise not everyone will have heard of us or been involved in the development of the Plan. The HNF volunteers have tried to contact as many people as possible - out on the streets, at events, working with other local organisations and via local and online publicity. There have also been two rounds of public consultation. HNF has 125 registered members and over 300 direct contacts - all people who live and/or work locally. We believe around 1000 have taken part in our activities in some way or another.

If you would like to join us, support our engagement work, or to be sent more information about it, please email: info@HarlesdenNeighbourhoodForum.com

Or you can register online, at: www.HarlesdenNeighbourhoodForum.com/signup

Q7– What’s in the Neighbourhood Plan?

A – The Plan is a lengthy document which can be summarised quite simply. It contains policies and aspirations around the topics below along with supporting evidence. It also establishes design principles, identifies sites that are suitable for development, sets out high-level descriptions of what that development might be, and puts forward early ideas for community focussed projects relevant to the topics.

- housing
- community facilities
- environment and open space
- local economy
- transport and access

Q8 – What’s the difference between a ‘policy’ and a ‘community aspiration’?

A – Assuming the Plan passes the vote and is made official, policies set out in the Plan will take legal effect – developers and other relevant persons will have to adhere to them, and they will be enforced in the same way as policies set by Brent Council are. Community aspirations are things that cannot become planning policy, but indicate what HNF, as part of the local community, would like to pursue – for example, trying to secure affordable homes to be built in the Old Oak and Park Royal development for local people in housing need.

Q9 – What’s in the Housing chapter, and what about affordable housing?

A – The Neighbourhood Plan highlights the lack of affordable housing in Harlesden. Alongside the disparity between local average earnings and the cost of housing, it also reviews the evidence and finds a range of problems, including high levels of homelessness and overcrowding. The Plan identified some sites that might be suitable for additional housing, although Harlesden’s density means that much of need will have to be addressed outside the neighbourhood area itself. The Neighbourhood Plan reflects the commitment of Brent’s Local Plan that 50% of new homes built should be affordable, and that of that 50%, 70% should be for social rent or affordable rent. Harlesden Neighbourhood Forum is also exploring options around community-led housing, which is an alternative approach to providing homes that are affordable to local residents.

Q10 – What’s in the Community Facilities chapter?

A – The evidence suggests that Harlesden is well provided with, or at least has good access to, a range of important community facilities and social infrastructure. These include schools, libraries, sports facilities and health services. However, Harlesden has a shortage of community meeting spaces, those that exist being mostly in churches and other faith premises, or pubs. The Plan calls for additional community space, ideally within a redeveloped Harlesden Plaza. The Plan also proposes that some local buildings should be nominated as Assets of Community Value, including Challenge House and some of Harlesden’s much-loved public houses.

Q11 – What’s in the Environment and Open Spaces chapter?

A – Harlesden has some great open spaces, from Roundwood Park to a number of smaller, ‘pocket’ parks and Harlesden Town Gardens. It also benefits from long-established community groups dedicated to protecting the local environment, such as HEART and Kensal Green Streets. However, parts of Harlesden are lacking open space, and there is a shortage of children’s play space in the area. The Plan calls for more public open space, for new developments to include space for residents to grow their own food, and for safe play provision for children. This chapter also highlights historic or prominent local buildings that are worth protecting, as well as making the case for a new town square to form the heart of the community.

Q12 – What’s in the Local Economy chapter?

A – The chapter deals with business and employment, including the town centre and industrial/commercial sites and premises. Like many parts of suburban London, Harlesden has a low ratio of jobs to population – most people in employment work elsewhere. Harlesden ward has higher unemployment than neighbouring areas, and a far higher proportion of people on out-of-work benefits. This chapter sets out how employment sites can be protected, and how business and footfall might be attracted to the town centre. The Plan commits HNF to continuing to engage with OPDC and others with the aim of ensuring that as many as possible of the job opportunities that will arise in the OPDC area are accessible to Harlesden residents.

Q13 – What’s in the transport and access chapter?

A – Harlesden has many strengths when it comes to travel – multiple bus routes, Willesden Junction and Harlesden stations, and the new interchange at Old Oak Common to come. However, despite very low car ownership in the area, congestion is high and air quality often poor. The major OPDC development may exacerbate some of this. The chapter makes the case for prioritising public transport, cycling and walking, when thinking of transport links and modes. The Plan calls for improvements to access at Willesden Junction as part of the expected major works, as well as better facilities to encourage cycling. As a community aspiration, the Plan commits the Forum to maintaining dialogue with Transport for London and OPDC to minimise and mitigate the impact of any additional road use due to the major OPDC development.

Q14 – What’s in the Site Allocations chapter?

A – Neighbourhood plans can designate sites for particular uses and development. It’s important to note that designating a piece of land for particular uses (such as housing or retail) doesn’t mean that the development will happen; it means that in planning terms, if development comes forward, this type of use will be supported. Harlesden is already heavily developed, but four sites have been identified that could include much needed new housing: around Willesden Junction station, the former Willesden Ambulance station on Harlesden Road, the Salvation Army building and Manor Park Works in the town centre, and Harlesden Plaza – the town centre car park and some adjacent buildings. Other uses are suggested on some sites too – particularly at Harlesden Plaza.

Q15 – What’s the plan for Harlesden Plaza?

A – Harlesden Plaza – the town centre car park and immediately surrounding area – has been designated as a site-specific allocation for development in the Neighbourhood Plan, as it has been in Brent Council’s Local Plan. The Harlesden Neighbourhood Plan proposes that mixed-use development should be permitted here. The proposal includes the provision of a town square to provide a centre to the community, additional space for shops, bars or restaurants, new, accessible community facilities, housing above the ground floor and adequate public car parking spaces.

No development plans have been put forward for this site yet, however **our illustration here** gives an idea of what a new town square could look like. HNF would encourage full, meaningful consultation with the community on detail if plans come forward.

If the Harlesden Neighbourhood Plan is made official, any development would have to comply with Plan’s design principles (see the Design Principles chapter), reflect Harlesden’s historic character and its urban design characteristics.



NB: As we run our campaign and approach the vote date, we may make additions to this FAQ list. Please see the page on our website for any additions, or again, contact us for more information.

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www.HarlesdenNeighbourhoodForum.com/Plan