

Mount Clare Planning Appeal

Thank you for the opportunity to speak.

I am speaking today on behalf of **all three ward councillors**, and on behalf of the **many residents who live around the Mount Clare site** and across the wider Alton Estate.

I have lived on the Alton Estate **all my life**. I know this site extremely well — not just as a councillor, but as someone who understands its **history, geography, constraints, and relationship to the surrounding community**. Mount Clare is not an abstract planning site. It is a highly sensitive location with **significant heritage value**, limited accessibility, and a very particular residential context.

At the outset, we wish to state clearly that we **fully endorse and support the Planning Authority's case** in opposing this appeal. In our view, the proposal before you **flies in the face of multiple Local Plan policies**, and the Council's reasons for refusal are both robust and well-founded.

We also fully support the statement that will be submitted by **Fleur Anderson MP**, which reflects the depth of concern felt locally.

As councillors, we have **consistently opposed the Appellant's proposals** for this site. We have delivered leaflets to residents explaining the reasons for our opposition, and we have spoken directly to many people living nearby. Residents are not confused about this scheme — they are **alarmed by it**.

The fundamental reason for that alarm is simple: **the site, and the existing buildings, are wholly unsuitable for the use being proposed.**

Conflict with Local Plan and Site Allocation

The entire site is designated in the Local Plan for **mixed-use development with residential uses** across the site as a whole.

What is proposed here is not mixed use. It is an **over-concentration of single-person accommodation**, creating a **large, transient population** entirely out of keeping with both the site allocation and the character of the surrounding area.

This is not balanced residential development. It is an intensive institutional use imposed on a site that was never designed for it and cannot accommodate it without harm.

Unsuitable and Poor-Quality Accommodation

We are particularly concerned about the **quality of accommodation proposed**, especially given that it is intended for people in **temporary accommodation**, who are among the most vulnerable in our housing system.

The accommodation is **cramped, poorly configured, and substandard** in terms of:

- room size
- layout
- internal circulation
- accessibility
- and access to meaningful communal amenity space

It would fail to meet **nationally described space standards**, and it provides **insufficient wheelchair-accessible rooms**, in

a borough with significant levels of disability and long-term illness among households in temporary accommodation.

People in temporary accommodation **deserve more than just a roof over their heads**. They deserve accommodation that is safe, dignified, and capable of supporting daily life — particularly where families or people with disabilities are concerned.

Wherever possible, residents in temporary accommodation should have **their own private facilities**. What is proposed here falls well short of that expectation.

Families, Children, and Local Impact

It is important to emphasise that **the overwhelming majority of households in temporary accommodation are not single individuals**, but **families**, often with children. This proposal is **fundamentally ill-suited** to meeting that need.

The site is remote from:

- shops
- schools
- healthcare
- leisure facilities
- and family support services

Public transport access is **limited and already under pressure**. Increased reliance on already stretched services would cause real harm, not only to future residents of the scheme but to the existing community.

There is also **no guarantee whatsoever** that the accommodation would be genuinely affordable or remain suitable over time.

Environmental and Sustainability Failures

The proposal fails to properly address **environmental and sustainability considerations**.

These are **1960s buildings**, and the application provides inadequate information on:

- CO₂ reduction
- energy efficiency
- ventilation and overheating
- or long-term adaptation to climate requirements

In the context of declared climate emergencies at both local and national level, this omission is serious.

Heritage Harm and Lack of Information

The site contains **exceptionally sensitive heritage assets**, including:

- **Mount Clare House**, a Grade I listed building
- the **Doric Temple**
- a **Registered Park and Garden**
- and a designated **Conservation Area**

We are deeply concerned that the proposal fails to provide sufficient information to demonstrate that these assets would be protected from harm. The absence of clear, detailed

proposals for Mount Clare House in particular is a glaring weakness.

Recent Appeal Decision – Legal Context

Finally, I want to highlight a matter of significant importance to local residents.

A recent Certificate of Lawfulness application for use of this site as temporary accommodation was refused by the Council and dismissed on appeal. That decision concluded that the proposed use would constitute a **material change of use requiring planning permission**, and that such permission had not been granted.

Residents would be **deeply alarmed and dismayed** if, having seen that appeal dismissed, this current appeal were now allowed by a different route.

Consistency, certainty, and confidence in the planning system matter — especially in locations as sensitive as this.

Conclusion

In conclusion, we oppose this appeal because:

- it conflicts with the Local Plan
- it proposes unsuitable and substandard accommodation
- it fails vulnerable residents
- it places unacceptable pressure on local infrastructure
- it inadequately addresses environmental and heritage impacts

- and it ignores the clear findings of a recent dismissed appeal

For all of these reasons, on behalf of my fellow councillors and our constituents, I respectfully urge you to **dismiss this appeal**.

Thank you for your time.