

Chair, thank you for the opportunity to speak and for accommodating me into your timetable today. I am glad that Cllr Graeme Henderson is also here today.

I have been the MP for Putney and Roehampton for six years, and I was a Wandsworth Councillor for seven years.

Throughout this time, I have worked closely with the Roehampton community and know this area, its history, and its challenges extremely well.

I am speaking today on behalf of the residents who live around the Mount Clare site and across the wider Alton Estate.

As you know from the many submissions, this is an area of high deprivation, with a very specific history and geography, all of which are highly relevant in planning terms. I am glad that you have been able to hear about this fully during the course of this hearing.

I absolutely agree with the statement made by councillors earlier this week, with Cllr Matthew Tiller speaking on behalf of all three Roehampton Councillors, who rightly highlighted that this is a highly sensitive location with significant heritage value, limited accessibility, and a very particular residential context. This development should not go ahead.

I 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.

There has been no engagement with the community, and this hearing is evidence of the developer trying to force this development through against the strong views of local residents which would be very damaging to social cohesion in Roehampton

just at a time when the community is about to undergo a very significant regeneration.

1. A Site with a History of Poor Accommodation Standards

Mount Clare has long been known locally for the poor quality of its former student accommodation. Students repeatedly raised concerns about the condition of the buildings, the shared facilities, and the general inadequacy of the living environment.

To now propose that this same accommodation, previously deemed substandard for students, should house vulnerable single adults is simply not credible. If it was not suitable for students, it is certainly not suitable for people who need stability, privacy, and support.

2. This Use Is Fundamentally Different from Student Accommodation

The applicant has attempted to draw parallels between the former student use and the proposed new use. Residents know this is not the case.

Student accommodation is seasonal, supported by a campus environment, and integrated into a wider institutional framework.

A large scale hostel for single temporary residents is entirely different in its intensity, pattern of occupation, and impact on local services. This is a material change of use, and it requires full planning scrutiny, not a certificate of lawfulness.

3. Conflict with the Wandsworth Local Plan and Site Allocation

This is one of the most significant issues before you today.

The Wandsworth Local Plan is clear about the future of this site.

The Mount Clare site allocation designates the land for mixed use development, with residential uses across the site as a whole.

The intention is to create a balanced, integrated community, not a single use enclave.

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

This proposal conflicts directly with several key Local Plan policies:

LP4 – Housing Mix

Requires a balanced mix of housing, including family homes. This proposal delivers no mix at all.

LP5 – Specialist Housing

Requires specialist accommodation to be appropriate to its location and well supported by services. This site is isolated and lacks the necessary infrastructure.

LP7 – Managing Impacts of Development

Requires avoidance of harm to amenity and over intensification. A 274 bed institutional hostel in a low density area is exactly that.

LP11 – Social and Community Uses

Requires such uses to be accessible, sustainable, and appropriate in scale. This proposal fails on all three counts.

PM3 – Roehampton Area Strategy

Emphasises balanced communities, improved connectivity, high quality housing, and sensitivity to heritage. This proposal conflicts with each of these objectives.

In short: 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.

4. Poor Transport Links and Limited Local Services

Mount Clare is the furthest point in Roehampton from any meaningful transport links. The bus service serving this part of the estate has been recognised by Transport for London as being so uniquely unreliable that I now co chair the Putney and Roehampton Bus Crisis Task Force, which brings together TfL, bus operators, councillors, and community representatives to address the problem.

Even with this work underway, the fundamental issue remains: this site is a long way from tubes and trains, and that will never change.

On top of this, the buses that do serve the area are already severely overcrowded. The Roehampton Students' Union is currently running a major campaign about the 265 route because students so frequently cannot get on the bus at all during peak times. This is not an occasional inconvenience, it is a daily reality for residents, students, and workers.

Adding a large number of new single residents to this already overstretched transport network would make an unsustainable situation even worse.

Healthcare provision is similarly stretched. Local GP services are already under resourced, and residents consistently tell me how difficult it is to secure appointments. The Roehampton regeneration plan has rightly acknowledged this and includes two new GP surgeries, but these will not be delivered for several years.

In the meantime, placing a large number of additional residents here would place a disproportionate and unsustainable strain on already overstretched health facilities. The infrastructure simply does not exist to support a development of this scale and nature.

5. The Local Need Is for Family Housing, Not High Intensity Single Occupancy

Roehampton's housing need is clear: more family homes, more long term, stable accommodation, and more balanced communities.

This proposal delivers none of that. It concentrates a large number of single, temporary residents in a location that is already struggling with limited services and poor connectivity.

6. The Accommodation Is Not Suitable for the Proposed Use

The buildings consist of shared facilities, not self contained units. For vulnerable individuals, privacy, dignity, and safety are essential. Shared bathrooms and kitchens do not meet modern expectations for supported accommodation and fall far short of best practice.

7. A Heritage Site Deserving of Respect

Mount Clare is a heritage asset, and the surrounding grounds form part of a historic landscape that holds deep significance for Roehampton. Any proposal for this site must demonstrate sensitivity, respect, and a clear understanding of its historic value.

Residents are not opposed to seeing Mount Clare brought back into use, far from it. They want to see it used, preserved, and enhanced. But they are deeply concerned that this proposal does not achieve that balance, but instead will result in further deterioration of Mount Clare House and the Temple.

One resident's comment sums it up powerfully:

"I want to see Mount Clare used and preserved. Yet I am concerned aspects of the plan fail to address its impact on nearby residents of this very high occupancy proposal."

This captures the sentiment of many: a desire to protect and revitalise the heritage asset, coupled with a clear recognition that the scale and nature of the proposed use would cause harm, both to the building's character and to the surrounding community.

8. Lack of Environmental Evidence

At a time when environmental considerations are central to planning decisions, it is striking that this application provides no meaningful environmental assessment. There is no clear evidence on sustainability, ecological impact, or transport emissions.

9. The Wrong Development in the Wrong Place

Chair, Roehampton is a compassionate community. Residents are not opposed to helping those in need. But compassion must be matched with good planning, appropriate locations, and suitable accommodation.

This proposal fails on all three counts. It conflicts with the Local Plan, the site allocation, and the needs of the community.

It is the wrong development in the wrong place, and residents are asking, firmly and respectfully, that you refuse it.

Thank you.