

Barrett. E

Dear Sir or Madam,

I am emailing to respond to the Merton New Local Plan Consultation.

Section 3: Urban Development Objectives and Good Growth Strategy

Question 1: Climate change needs to be a much higher priority than growth and this must be taken into account in this policy. Climate change is by far the most important problem that we must respond to and this needs to be included during the planning phase. We also need to protect the character of local areas and a new policy on neighbour protection would help for this in the case of the development of a nearby or adjacent site.

Question 2: It appears that clear targets need to be included so shortfalls and contraventions can be strictly monitored and resolved.

Section 4: Neighbourhoods

Wimbledon: Policy N3.6

Question 13: In order for Wimbledon to continue being a thriving destination for local residents, businesses and visitors more plans need to be made for this. This would include having a plan towards a zero-energy local economy and this would most likely be incremental. It's also very important to preserve the local character of Wimbledon and include more "greening" of the town centre.

Question 14: Additional Comments

Masterplans for major sites: Merton needs to have a policy that includes a masterplan for each major site in the town centre at the appropriate time. This should include a public consultation and could be funded by the landowner or the developer. Approval should be required before any planning application is submitted for each individual location for each masterplan.

Pandemic and post-pandemic planning: Covid-19 has changed how we live and work and Merton Council needs to fully understand the implications of the pandemic and to make plans for our town centre based on this new reality. It's extremely important to challenge and review assumptions relating to development in Wimbledon town centre.

We need to wait and see what space is actually required before building new offices or hotels and wasting valuable energy, materials/resources and funding. Creating new buildings increases CO2 emissions and this contributes to Climate Change. My office in central London has closed permanently because of Covid-19 and we have

all become virtual employees. It appears that the enormous increase in home working will mean that far less office space will be required and this will result in a reduced height of office buildings.

Hotel Development: I can't see the need for further development of hotels in Wimbledon. Again, we need to wait and see how much hotel space we actually need in Wimbledon post Covid-19.

Building height: The proposed plans include 44 meter high buildings in some locations. Local residents have consistently and repeatedly stated that buildings need to be limited in height to an absolute maximum of 22 meters in order to respect local character and heritage.

Concert Hall: It would be fantastic for Wimbledon to have a new centre for the performing and creative arts or a new concert hall and this would be a wonderful positive statement and commitment to the arts.

Promoting a vibrant day/night economy: any plan for promoting this needs to protect the quality of life of nearby residents and the character of Wimbledon. This needs to be included at a policy level and needs to appeal to all users.

Future location of tram stop: The tram stop terminus should continue to be located inside the station and not moved to street level.

Question 14 continued: Specific SITE ALLOCATIONS in Wimbledon Town Centre:

The following comments relate to the Local Plan proposals for use of specific Wimbledon town centre sites Stage2a_9_Wimbledon_FINAL.pdf (merton.gov.uk) - pages 20-62.

The proposals for all of the sites in Wimbledon Town Centre are rather vague and it appears that an opportunity to create some new and exciting places with uses that would benefit the local community are being missed.

The height of **all** of the buildings mentioned in the list below should not be as high as 44 meters but need to be significantly lower. This should be an absolute maximum of 22 meters high or 6 to 7 storeys. Local residents have repeatedly stated that building heights should be limited to 22 meters.

Wi 2 Broadway car park, adjoining the theatre: The Council owns this site and could enhance the area and its character by developing the site primarily for community use.

Wi 5 Hartfield Road Car Park (Council owned): The proposal says development could include taller buildings with a wide variety of uses. As owner, the Council can

take the opportunity to create a concert hall or centre for the performing and creative arts that would be of great significance to the local area and the whole of London.

Wi 6 Highlands House, 165 The Broadway and Wi 10 Prospect House, St George's Road: Heights should be restricted to a maximum of 22m or 6/7 storeys.

Wi 9 8 St Georges Road (Community Centre site): Council ownership means community interests can and should be prioritised. Here again, building height should be limited to 22 meters.

Wi 11 Victoria Crescent, including Piazza: The Plan should protect the Broadway frontage Conservation Area and the public highway through the piazza.

Wi 16 Centre Court Shopping Centre: It is essential that the Council protects conservation areas along Queens Road & Wimbledon Broadway, two listed buildings and the South Park Gardens Conservation Area. Building height should be limited to a maximum of 22 meters as the public has repeatedly and consistently stated, not 44 meters. Centre Court would benefit from some renovation/refurbishment without demolition or any increase in scale.

The original plans for creating Centre Court shopping centre made decisions about preserving local historical architecture and heritage and these decisions must be respected and maintained.

The revised plans for the YMCA are a very good example of developers responding to the wishes of local residents who will have to live close to these buildings and whose lives will be impacted by them.

Questionnaire Section 6: Places and spaces in a growing borough

Questions 29-30 D5.1:

More changes need to be made to this policy. It needs to include much more protection for neighbours' daylight, sunlight, and privacy. Local residents have consistently stated that they do not agree to having tall buildings in Wimbledon Town Centre and they have said that new buildings should not be higher than 22 meters (6/7 storeys). More detail and rigour are required to explain 'high quality' and facilitate enforcement to describe the high design quality. The enhancement of conservation areas and other heritage needs to be much more positively outlined and agreed to.

Questions 31-32 D5.2:

I do not think that the Urban design and public realm policy ensures the creation of sustainable, efficient and high-quality design and layout of the urban environment. The policy needs explicit targets and standards and to emphasise the protection of privacy and daylight/sunlight against potentially intrusive development.

Questions 37-38 D5.5: Managing heritage assets:

More changes need to be made to this policy. The draft plan mentions here again 'Merton's published Conservation Area character appraisals and management plans and the guidance statements set out in the Borough Character Studies.' The local plan should include a commitment to keep these documents up to date to reflect changes that have taken place since they were originally written, and to write those documents which are still missing.

Questions 41-42 D5.7. Digital infrastructure:

More needs to be done on this policy. The draft plan specifies: 'In particularly sensitive areas, notably where heritage assets are affected, locate equipment in underground chambers.' The plan should recognise that there are likely to be many places that are particularly sensitive to the impact of telecommunications equipment.

Section 9: ECONOMY**Question 67 Policy EC7.1 Promoting economic growth and successful high streets:**

More needs to be done on this policy. Job creation is important, but it must be seen as part of a balance of goals that include tackling climate change and creating an environment where people will enjoy living and working. It also needs to take into account the changes that have taken place because of Covid-19 and the far larger numbers of people who are working from home. My office in Central London near Cannon Street EC4 has closed permanently because of Covid-19 and we have all become virtual employees.

Question 68: The plan should recognise that the aim should be not just to generate trips to Wimbledon, but to make Wimbledon town centre a great place for the people who already live and work there.

Question 83 TC7.9 Culture, arts and tourism development:

More needs to be done on this policy. As neither the description nor justification of this policy seem to be accessible online, we cannot agree that this policy supports the provision of cultural, arts and tourism uses.

Question 84: The omission of any reference to seizing the opportunity to create a music centre for local, London-wide, national and international performers and audiences is to be regretted. Such a project has had significant public support in Wimbledon for many years.

Blue and Green Infrastructure: Section 10 of the consultation survey, questions 85-106:

Merton Council needs to address toxic air and noise pollution by continuing to support and improve public transport, cycling and pedestrians. We need to encourage far fewer local residents to own cars. I've lived in Wimbledon for nearly 30 years very happily without needing a car. New developments need to preserve our very precious and special green spaces including our public parks, greens spaces and private back gardens. Every park and garden provides a place for the residents to enjoy outdoor space and a home for local and visiting wildlife. Parks, public green spaces and gardens play a crucial role in supporting wildlife diversity and preservation and also provide wildlife corridors.

This pandemic has demonstrated how crucial green spaces are to everyone's mental and physical wellbeing. Everyone in our community needs easy access to green spaces. They are also crucial to improving local air quality and to preserving local wildlife (flora and fauna). There should be harsh financial penalties for developers who damage biodiversity. Suitable areas should also be found for major tree-planting programmes as well as other areas of nature.

Climate Change: Section 12, questions 118 to 131:

The consultation needs to include more information about flooding and water shortage, subsidence and overheating. In the town centre, the plan's emphasis on retrofitting existing buildings & improving energy performance and on re-using building materials is not well supported by current practice in encouraging big new office blocks in the town centre. Retrofitting existing buildings and improving their energy performance is much more environmentally friendly than replacing old buildings with new office blocks and this needs to become standard practice in the town centre.

I hope you will take my views into consideration.

Thank you very much,

Yours faithfully,