

Wimbledon East Hillside Residents' Association (WEHRA) wishes to submit our views on community involvement.

It is no secret the procedure for 'consulting' with residents in this Borough is not fit/no longer fit for purpose. Despite thousands of residents' responses to dozens of Council consultations in recent years, very few of the important points made by local people actually get into the report, and even fewer points make it to the Final Report. This suggests that Council officers are instructed to make a decision, then 'consult' with local people (with no obligation to take on board any comments or make any revisions), and then publish whatever they - of their own accord - feel is 'right'. Inevitably, perhaps a few modifications are made to the draft report, but little attention is given to important points and constructive comments received from the public.

The problem is further exacerbated because the questionnaires generally used for 'consultations' are poorly designed and sloppily executed. It is pretty evident no quantitative research professional has been involved in development of questionnaires. The fact the Council has used 'Survey Monkey' tells how low the bar is set at present. The recent WTC Masterplan 'consultation' was just a blank box and an email address to send comments, and while the report was wildly enthusiastic, it contained very few critical points made by hundreds of local residents, and yet included other 'important points' raised by, for example, one person. The 'elephants in the room' -- such as need for sustainable development, the deadly urgent requirement for zero carbon buildings, critical infrastructure considerations, and an inspired transport proposal to swiftly address the dangerous levels of air pollution -- are omitted from what is mis-titled a 'Masterplan'.

There is another, more professional way to involve local people in Council consultations in future. That is to work with a transparent, open-ended approach, avoiding existing inclination for pre-determination that staff at the Council seem to feel is the only option. Thankfully we live in a democracy, and we know this method for involving local people can work very well in Merton.

The approach has been developed by London professionals working in the Built Environment. The method being used regularly now, and recommended by the NLA, is called **PLACE REVIEW**. Developed by architect Terry Farrell, and welcomed by London's most inspired architects and urban planners, the process begins as white paper, with small groups of interested parties and stakeholders. No 'secret meetings', no 'back room deals', no 'redacted reports'. Open meetings are held to discuss the components of a project PRIOR to a Developer commissioning surveys, reports, drawings etc. In this simple, transparent way, arguably the most successful building in Merton has just been unveiled: Wellington House, Wimbledon Hill Road. It is terrific that Merton is pleased with this achievement. It has been a careful collaboration with Merton, local residents, the landowner, the architect, tree wardens and environmentalists. It may well be the first **Place Review**, and the resulting building speaks for itself. We hope this cooperative approach will continue as we look to the future.

The Climate Emergency has been declared. We want, and Merton NEEDS to achieve a ZERO CARBON Borough, and we should aim to do this by 2030, to ensure we get there by 2050. With the Wimbledon Masterplan in the development stage, now is the time to set this ambitious target. Waiting 15 years will mean Wimbledon will be a backward town, unable to achieve the 2050 objectives here.

Please consider this valid, inspirational approach for Future Wimbledon, Future Morden, Future Mitcham and all Future Merton. It will bring out the BEST in everybody.

Yours sincerely,

Leigh Terrafranca, WEHRA Planning Officer

