



AFC Wimbledon  
Plough Lane Stadium  
Plough Lane  
Wimbledon  
London  
1<sup>st</sup> February 2021

London Borough of Merton

Future Merton

**SENT VIA EMAIL**

Dear Future Merton team,

**London Borough of Merton New Local Plan, Representation by AFC Wimbledon**

The following pages contain some observations and representations from AFC Wimbledon for input into Merton's New Local Plan process.

**We are back home – thank you.**

AFC Wimbledon moved into our new stadium on Plough Lane in November 2020. We are grateful for the support we have received from Merton's leadership and officers, plus your colleagues at the Greater London Authority over the last decade. Thank you from all at AFC Wimbledon and the Dons Trust.

Since the opening of our stadium, we have had multiple issues to tackle on completion and handover of our stadium all in the context of COVID-19 that has impacted building works and our core day to day operations.

Our aspiration is to be the best fan owned community club in the world, to be successful on the pitch and leverage our profile to be a force for good in Merton and south west London. We want to provide a focal point for the community, and be net contributors to the economy, health, and wellbeing of residents.

Our *Wimbledon Foundation* incorporating the *Dons Local Action Group* "DLAG" is making significant impact locally and in 2020 had a high profile nationally for the support it is giving locally.

**As we return to Wimbledon an overview.**

Our representation aims to start to set out an exciting vision of how our stadium project can shape our local area in the coming years. We use two terms:

- *Stadium Precinct* – the land and property we own and control.
- *Stadium District* – a wider area, perhaps of 1km radius, that extends into the London Borough of Wandsworth.



## Stadium District.

Experience in Britain and around the world has shown stadium led mixed use development projects are often catalysts for wider area urban regeneration and economic growth. So, we are keen to take an active interest in how our wider Stadium District can evolve in the coming years.

Being such a catalyst urban regeneration development and improving place making was part of vision when we conceived our stadium project.

Our new Stadium on Plough Lane currently comprises one permanent main stand and three high quality temporary stands. Our site has the infrastructure to support full completion of the stadium to a 20,000 capacity plus associated mixed use enabling development.

- We note that our stadium site is in “Wimbledon – Policy N3.6” and “Wandle Valley Policy N3.7”.
- Within the London Plan we are in an “Opportunity and Intensification Area” along the Wandle Valley.
- As we are close to the River Wandle, we will continue to support the repair and revitalisation of the Wandle Valley in our area.
- We would request that all Wandle Valley mapping identifies our stadium as a place to visit on the Wandle Valley Trail.
- Likewise, for all other Merton, London, and national mapping our stadium is identified and referenced appropriately.
- We note that significant areas are identified as Strategic Industrial Land (SIL) or Local Industrial Land (LIL). We believe policy should not be prescriptive as there are fundamental changes in industry and businesses underway that would warrant a more flexible designation that would support contemporary business space, more jobs, high quality placemaking and other development.
- We question whether the SIL/LIL designation will assist in appropriate inward investment. We fully endorse having local businesses on our doorstep but seek to improve environmental conditions alongside the River Wandle and in our local area, plus encourage a greater amount of walking and cycling in the vicinity of the stadium. We believe this will foster good growth and encourage the development of SMEs, especially those from sectors such as creative industries and other growth sectors.
- We believe there is the opportunity for this area, our Stadium District, to develop a strong sense of place in the coming years. The traditional identity has been “Summerstown”. Given our “border” location with the London Borough of Wandsworth the opportunity of working with them and the GLA should be considered. This can help to leverage ours and others investment that would support cohesive placemaking in this part of south west London and in time an attractive local centre can emerge.

In conclusion with Merton, Wandsworth and the GLA we would be supportive of a masterplan approach that sets out a vision for the Stadium District to leverage the catalyst investment made in our stadium and the adjacent residential project. For example, investigation of issues such as environmental uplift, the business base and growth opportunities, place branding, better connections, and permeability such as a bridge across the River Wandle and potential intensification





of sites to include high quality placemaking, contemporary development with business space, residential and community amenities.

### **Stadium Precinct.**

We can deliver most impact in contributing to local urban regeneration (physical, social, and environmental) through the full development of our Stadium Precinct.

Our stadium and associated land are part of a mixed-use development project that also comprises 600+ residential units, retail, and leisure facilities. However, there is much more that we can achieve on our Stadium Precinct.

Now that we have returned home, we wish to:

- With Merton, plan for the full completion of our Stadium Precinct, and bring forward development of our stadium bowl that will incorporate a mix of commercial and community uses.
- Engage with our local community. The Wimbledon Foundation incorporating Dons Local Action Group “DLAG” who are leading our community outreach and generated significant profile for their work in Merton and surrounding areas in 2020.
- Continue to develop our extensive community football coaching and representation at all levels (and particularly for the ladies and girls’ section), with appropriate facilities to support that.
- Accelerate our engagement with local schools and other community groups.
- Engage with the local business community and play a part in the growth of this business ecosystem to support business growth, jobs, and economic growth.
- Be supportive of placemaking and encourage the evolution of a local centre with our Stadium Precinct at its heart.

AFC Wimbledon is keen to ensure that existing and emerging planning policy does not set out any potentially unintended barriers to new development coming forward and that it encourages sustainable development that can support growth, resilience, and equity at our Stadium Precinct site and its surrounds.

### **Reference to specific items in the New Local Plan.**

#### **Wimbledon – Policy N3.6**

#### **Wimbledon Surrounding Neighbourhoods**

Incorporate a section in this part of the document that:

- Recognises the potential of AFCW Wimbledon and our Stadium Precinct to deliver economic, community and sporting benefits locally.
- Support AFC Wimbledon in the full development our Stadium Precinct to help deliver commercial revenues and community outreach.
- Support positioning of our Stadium Precinct as a mixed-use destination that can act as a local neighbourhood centre aligning with Merton’s 20-minute city aspirations.



The potential of our Stadium Precinct to be a catalyst project for the local area that can contribute to your urban development objectives in the wider Stadium District area:

- Strategic Objectives 1 supporting resilience
- Strategic Objectives 2 good growth
- Strategic Objective 3 tackling climate change
- Strategic Objective 4 place plans and the 20-minute neighbourhood
- Strategic Objective 5 places for people

In your “Vision and Strategic objectives” document we noticed two items that we would like updated please,

- *Points of Interest.* We would request recognition of our Stadium on all appropriate mapping as with the All-England Lawn Tennis Club (AELTC). The Stadium and Club are sources of pride for Merton and merit the same profile.
- *1.3.1.* We are hosting home games and look forward post COVID 19 to welcoming our fans old and new to our stadium. We do aspire to reach the Premiership “Premier League”; however, we are currently in the English Football League!

#### **Site allocation Wi12**

First, as we are planning for the completion of our stadium within our Stadium Precinct we welcome and support that our new stadium on Plough Lane, has been allocated within the New Local Plan as Site Allocation ‘Wi12’.

Second, we note that our site is on the border with Wandsworth defined by Summerstown and Riverside Road.

We note that this section Wi12 still talks about the site under construction and presents a negative view of the site. AFC Wimbledon, development partners and Merton have made significant investment that is improving the built environment, delivering homes, community, sports, leisure, recreation, shopping, and business opportunities, and changing perceptions of this part of the Borough and neighbouring Wandsworth. We believe it is appropriate for this investment to be reflected in this section with a more positive description of the site and its potential that our own, others and Merton’s own investment has created.

An update of Site Allocation Wi12 should therefore be made to reflect the change and continued opportunity, items that are likely to require updating include for example:

- Flood storage capacity with the resilience measures incorporated within our stadium development.
- S106 monies that remain set aside for local projects – cycling, traffic calming, environmental upgrade etc.
- Presence of new residential and relationship with heavy industrial/waste management to the north west.
- Site Description. Phase 1 of the AFC Wimbledon Stadium on Plough Lane is now open. We are planning continued development of the stadium and associated development for full





completion in accordance with the planning permission that supports a variety of uses.

- Current Use. Stadium with supporting enabling uses.
- Suggested Use. Stadium with supporting enabling uses that can be developed into a high-quality mixed-use destination that can become a local neighbourhood centre to serve the existing residential, local businesses, new residential populations, and wider south west London area.
- A stadium led mixed use destination that can support local economic growth, resilience, and equity and add to the profile of Merton, Wimbledon, and the Wandle Valley regionally, nationally, and internationally.
- Intensification of sporting, leisure, and recreation activity with supporting enabling development. Developments that facilitate more sporting activity may be enabled by more viable uses, subject to meeting planning policy, evidence, and consultation.

### Strategic Planning factors

#### *Issues and Opportunities*

As we have completed and opened the first phase of our stadium, we have now commenced the preparation of a strategy to identify the development opportunities for the full completion of our stadium and associated enabling development on the land we own – our Stadium Precinct.

Our “Stadium Precinct Development Strategy” will set out a vision, strategy and action plan for a high-quality mixed-use destination that complements and adds to the adjacent residential scheme plus the businesses to the north and south. Our priorities in progressing this strategy are too:

- complete our stadium bowl with a capacity of 20,000.
- drive revenues for the club from enabling development.
- support an increased community outreach programme.
- deliver high quality placemaking.
- showcase Wimbledon’s sporting heritage, plus other local social, economic and heritage stories.
- become a hub destination in the Wandle Valley.
- a high-quality gateway location to the Borough.
- deliver a positive economic, environmental and community dividend.
- facilitate our efforts to provide health and wellbeing opportunities to the local community through coaching, playing facilities and other activities.

Overall using our stadium, profile, and influence to support appropriate urban regeneration and positive change in our Stadium Precinct and the wider area, our Stadium District. In this regard we will seek to work collaboratively with Merton and others as appropriate.



**Morden – Policy N3.3 And Environment –Strategic Policy 08.1, 08.2, 08.5**

We note that Merton is proposing a major regeneration project in Morden Town Centre. Two components of this have been defined:

- Morden Regeneration Zone
- Wider Morden Town Centre Area

We are supportive of this transformational project for the Borough. Furthermore, to the south west fronting the “Wider Morden Town Centre Area” is Morden Park. We support the bringing back into everyday use for sports, leisure, recreation, and associated development the playing fields that have been unused for many years. Notably policy items: 08.1: k and l; 08.2, 08.5 (8.5.1-8.5.6). We support this through your open space and sports planning policies. We will work with Merton to see how we can support your major regeneration objectives in Morden both in the Morden Regeneration Zone and Wider Morden Town Centre Area.

In conclusion AFC Wimbledon is keen to accelerate our contribution to the future sustainable growth and success of our home Borough plus our wider south west London location.

Yours sincerely

**Joe Palmer**

**Chief Executive, AFC Wimbledon**

CC: Mark Allison, Leader of the Council; Sadiq Khan, Mayor of London