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**From:** S [REDACTED] Neal [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** 20 December 2018 13:34  
**To:** F [REDACTED] McGarry; J [REDACTED] McGinlay  
**Cc:** J [REDACTED] Stephenson  
**Subject:** Draft representations towards the Draft Local Plan and Masterplan

[REDACTED]

I hope all is well.

Following your discussions with [REDACTED], please find attached draft versions of the representations towards both the draft Local Plan and Masterplan.

We would welcome your feedback on these representations prior to their formal submission in the new year.

We look forward to hearing back and wish you a merry Christmas and happy new year.

Kind regards,

[REDACTED]

S [REDACTED] Neal [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

Montagu Evans LLP  
[REDACTED]

PD6926/JS/SN  
[REDACTED]

04 January 2019

Planning Policy  
London Borough of Merton  
Civic Centre  
London Road  
Morden  
SM4 5DX

[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
Sent via Email and Post

Dear Sirs

### **SUBMISSION OF REPRESENTATIONS TOWARDS DRAFT FUTURE WIMBLEDON MASTERPLAN**

On behalf of our client, Aberdeen Standard Investments (ASI), we have the pleasure in submitting representations to the Future Wimbledon Masterplan Consultation Draft. The representations focus predominately on the Centre Court Shopping Centre, hereafter known as 'the Site', of which our client manages on behalf of the fund in which it sits.

Centre Court is the principal purpose-built shopping centre in Wimbledon town centre and opened in 1992. It is a typical shopping centre of its time with an internal mall with "anchors" at either end in terms of a department store and foodstore. However, it is differentiated from many other shopping centres by it incorporating the former Wimbledon Town Hall on its Broadway frontage as well as the elevations of older buildings along Queens Road, although these have largely been truncated by the construction of the shopping centre.

Over recent years, there has been a significant change in the retail food and beverage, and leisure environment, not only in the rise of online purchases and multi-channel retailing but also with the change in the type of retail, food and beverage and leisure and other attractions that customers prefer to see in a town centre.

This has been compounded by retailers choosing to consolidate their representation in fewer (often larger) town centres. Prior to ASI's response to the draft Masterplan being published, it did not envisage an opportunity to redevelop the Site. However, the Masterplan provides an opportunity to suggest there are options for a more comprehensive redevelopment of the Site which, in turn, will assist in providing a retail offer and other attractions which are more suitable for modern requirements.

Given the uncertainties about the delivery and timescales for Crossrail 2, ASI agrees that it is correct for the masterplan to explore the future of Wimbledon town centre with and without Crossrail 2. At present, formal confirmation has not been given by TfL on the funding of Crossrail 2 and the proposed location of the platforms reflecting track alignment, although proposals have been put forward in previous rounds of consultation. Therefore, consideration has been given when assessing the draft Masterplan on development options with and without Crossrail 2.

These representations aim to comment on the sections of the draft Future Wimbledon Masterplan which either relate directly to the Site or are relevant to the future redevelopment of the Site. The main areas that we are seeking to provide comments on include:

- Public Space Enhancement;
- Connectivity;

- Heritage;
- Building Heights; and
- Neighbourhoods.

#### Public Space Enhancement

The lack of appropriate public space within Wimbledon Town Centre has been identified for a considerable period of time. Public Space can be a driver for maximising footfall within a town centre and in turn can help to increase footfall for retail and other uses within close proximity.

As mentioned on page 84 of the draft Masterplan, consideration has been given to a new public space in front of Wimbledon Train Station. We support this proposal and we suggest this could also continue towards Centre Court allowing for a linkage to the public space enhancements which could be included within the Site.

These public space enhancements will not only aid better pedestrian circulation around this busy part of the town centre but also help improve footfall and the amount of time people spend in Wimbledon. It will also positively enhance the setting of the listed buildings on the Site, such as the Town Hall, and within the local area.

#### Connectivity

When considering improvements to a town centre, connectivity is a key aspect as it seeks to promote flexible movement and in turn increases footfall within an area.

As mentioned on page 86 and the diagram on page 87 of the draft Masterplan, positive improvements are required along Queens Road.

When considering the existing shopping centre, the current layout does not promote positive connectivity to surrounding uses. In addition, the current layout does not make best use of the possible frontages facing Queen's Road. Queen's Road is characterised by higher pedestrian footfall near the Broadway which falls off rapidly progressing in the direction of South Park Gardens. This pattern will continue, but the opportunity exists to create more linkages from Queens Road into the site which will improve circulation.

Furthermore, it is understood that Wimbledon Train Station is experiencing very high levels of passenger movements and is nearing capacity and this will only increase further in the future. One way to relieve this lack of capacity is by providing additional station exits onto Alexandra Road and Queens Road as suggested on page 113 of the draft Masterplan. The redevelopment of Centre Court would allow for such a pedestrian link to be considered and brought forward.

#### Heritage

As mentioned on page 90 of the draft Masterplan, the Council has identified this as an opportunity to 'restore, respect and enhance historic parades and mews'. The Town Hall and Old Fire Station buildings are noted on the plan (page 91) as historic buildings which could be enhanced.

The existing Centre Court Shopping Centre makes use of the historic buildings. However, it is not able to promote the positive character of the buildings based on the current layout of the site, as well as the enclosure provided by roof structures and their relationship to newer buildings. The redevelopment of the Site would allow for the setting of historic buildings to be enhanced.

#### Building Heights

The draft Masterplan gives guidance on the potential building heights across Wimbledon Town Centre, with preference for the tallest buildings being located above the existing open tracks adjacent to the Station and Centre Court site.

We are in strong agreement that it is appropriate for tall buildings to be located within the vicinity of the Station and that Centre Court should now be identified as such a location.

At present, there is uncertainty about whether and in what form Crossrail 2 will be coming forward. This includes questions about the alignment of the tracks and consequent impact upon the location of the platforms which all provide engineering challenges. Furthermore, developing over tracks adds significant construction costs because of the complexity of an over-track structure including where the piling can take place, as well as the cost of an extended build programme because of the needs of ensuring the railway remains operational. Taking this into consideration, the team's experience is that it may be challenging to deliver tall buildings above railway infrastructure. Furthermore, no development can realistically take place above the tracks until there is more certainty about Crossrail 2.

As mentioned on page 92 "the key to promoting good growth is ensuring that development is viable and deliverable". As there is a focus for promoting development which is deliverable ASI strongly suggests that the Centre Court site is an appropriate location for high density development for a mix of uses and this should be reflected in the Masterplan. When reviewing the redevelopment options of Centre Court, the inclusion of tall buildings would allow for a comprehensive mixed-use scheme to be promoted which would seek to provide shops, restaurants, cafes and leisure sought by local residents, whilst also allowing flexible office and workspaces to be included as well as new homes.

ASI has not reached a firm conclusion on appropriate building heights or massing and would be pleased to work with Merton Council to agree that height. However, it can offer the following comments based upon its initial assessment.

The tallest buildings should be located along the northwest boundary of the site, adjacent to the existing tracks. They would then decrease in height moving along Queens Road and towards the residential properties to the northeast.

The Masterplan shows building heights of up to 18 storeys. ASI considers that the Centre Court site could accommodate significant height based upon these principles with greater height towards the Broadway. However, the appropriate height will vary across the site reflecting the impact on key views and heritage assets, the massing in the centre of the site and close to street frontages as well as the relationship between individual existing and proposed blocks. This may mean that the appropriate height may be higher or lower than those blocks currently identified over the tracks. ASI would be willing to work with the Council to agree appropriate massing guidelines based upon vigorous heritage, townscape and visual impact analysis.

More generally, we would suggest that the 'Building Height Guide' is only considered as an approximate with the final heights being determined with the assistance of a Heritage, Townscape & Visual Impact Assessment (HTVIA).

### Neighbourhoods

By dividing the various areas of Wimbledon Town Centre into 'Neighbourhoods' it helps to focus the appropriate scale and form of development within each location.

At present Centre Court is divided between two neighbourhoods, Neighbourhood 6 (Station Central) and Neighbourhood 8 (Queens Road). As the site falls under a single owner and any future redevelopment options would likely incorporate the whole site, we would suggest that the Site should fall within a single neighbourhood. Therefore, we suggest that the Site should fall within Neighbourhood 8 (Queens Road). This also reflects that any development over the station is likely to be highly contingent on announcements relating to Crossrail 2.

From reviewing the vision for Queens Road, although this provides a positive response to the public space and connectivity points raised previously, it suggests a retention of Centre Court in a largely unchanged form. As mentioned previously, the retail market has changed since Centre Court was originally constructed, therefore the opportunity now exists in the short to medium term to consider a more radical approach to Centre Court which is likely to result in a different form of development with a broader range of use, more people working

and living in the location, and a wider range of use. The anticipated timescales in the Masterplan are consistent with this approach.

As such, we have provided a list of other options that could be included within the vision for Queens Road, this is not a comprehensive list and could be discussed further. The vision we have put forward for Neighbourhood 8 (Queens Road) is as follows:

- High quality architecture;
- Diverse mix of uses promoting economy of use at all times of the day;
- Enhanced streetscapes;
- Quality public realm and greening;
- Improved site-wide and onward pedestrian connections;
- Celebration of historic buildings;
- Relevant retail offer;
- Diverse places to eat and drink offer providing street activation;
- High quality market and affordable housing;
- Flexible leisure and social hubs; and
- Quality hotels & conference facilities and scaled workspaces.

### Summary

Aberdeen Standard Investments supports the clarification of development potential in Wimbledon town centre provided by the Masterplan as a positive step towards the future development and growth of Wimbledon Town Centre.

Although consideration has been given to Crossrail 2 and the corridor it is likely to occupy, given the emphasis on delivery, it is important to identify the sites (or neighbourhoods as defined in the Masterplan) which can be delivered at an early stage in a scenario of before or without Crossrail 2.

The draft Masterplan has provided a perfect opportunity to consider the future redevelopment options relating to the Centre Court Site. Over recent years, there has been a significant change in the retail environment and this provides the opportunity to provide a development which is more suited to modern demands.

Centre Court Shopping Centre is now 27 years old. Its linear form means that it is reliant upon shoppers being drawn along the mall. Aberdeen Standard Investments' view is that it has too much retail floorspace compared with current and future demand, but also has too few places to eat and drink.

Aberdeen Standard believes there is now an opportunity to explore a different future for the Centre Court site where retailing, places to eat and drink and leisure attractions can be consolidated towards the Broadway but also it can accommodate office/employment floorspace as well as places to live.

As Centre Court is in single ownership, it should be located within a single neighbourhood rather than being split at present. Therefore we have suggested it is included within Neighbourhood 8 (Queens Road).

The Masterplan covers a wide area and certain sites are capable of being delivered considerably earlier than others, reflecting matters such as when sites are available for development, which is influenced by lease breaks. Also some sites are likely to require site assembly. The Masterplan should develop the point about deliverability,

giving priority to sites which may be delivered at an earlier stage in the life of the plan. Centre Court is one such site as it is in single ownership with no need for land assembly.

A masterplan is a spatial guide to how planning policy may be implemented. ASI would like to work with Merton Council to discuss how appropriate height and density guidelines can be agreed in the final Masterplan when it is published in spring 2019.

We hope that the points raised within the representations are helpful and provide an appropriate response to the matters within the draft Masterplan. We would welcome the opportunity to discuss the points raised further or respond to any other queries you may have.

Should you wish to discuss this further, please do not hesitate to contact either J [REDACTED] Stephenson [REDACTED] or S [REDACTED] Neal [REDACTED] [REDACTED] who would be happy to assist.

Yours faithfully,

Montagu Evans LLP