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From: B [REDACTED] Barton [REDACTED]
Sent: 06 January 2019 23:37
To: Future Merton
Subject: Response to Merton Council's Consultation on the draft "Wimbledon Masterplan"
Attachments: Wimbledon Masterplan response.docx

Please find attached my comments on the draft "Wimbledon Masterplan" and on the consultation process.

Best regards

B [REDACTED] Barton

RESPONSE TO MERTON COUNCIL CONSULTATION ON DRAFT "WIMBLEDON MASTERPLAN"

I applaud the following aspirations voiced in the draft Masterplan:

- To attract investment.
- High quality design.
- Greening of the town centre.

I consider that these are all things that many residents would support, and suggest that more work and thinking should be done to establish how these things can be delivered in reality.

The current Masterplan document is strong on rhetoric but lacks the detail necessary for it to be a robust, enforceable "blueprint" for the town, that convincingly stands up as something that can possibly ensure that high quality design will be delivered.

The one point on which any real detail is set out relates to building heights: target heights have been mapped out for the entire town centre area.

In contrast, the design brief is little more than 2 pages of pictures intended to represent the town's "DNA", with little explanation or analysis about how this will influence future planning decisions, or what design standards developers will be encouraged to follow.

Already, there are warning signs that the "high quality design" that is promised, will not materialise unless the document is developed to include specific guidelines and requirements.

A recent planning application for a 177-bedroomed hotel in Hartfield Road refers at length to the draft Masterplan, and a supporting Planning Statement by Savills states that Merton Council has already given it a "green light". Regrettably, the design is a boring, bulky block and shows no sign of the high quality promised: the main aim seems to be to secure permission for the largest possible building on the site, with little or no sensitivity for the neighbouring residential streets.

With work, I think that the objectives listed above (attracting the right kind of investment, high quality design and "greening" of the town), could gain

widespread support, so would be worth developing, in a further, ongoing consultation process.

Whilst those points show some promise, and merit further work, unfortunately, I have a number of serious concerns regarding the Masterplan, as detailed below.

1. Inadequacy of the consultation process

I should preface my comments by saying that I do not consider that there has been proper consultation over the Wimbledon Masterplan. The Masterplan is described (variously) as a plan for the next 20 to 40 years. It is of huge importance to local residents, businesses, and users of the town, and it is regrettable that there has been a woeful lack of publicity regarding the plans.

As a responsible local council, confident that its proposals are right for residents and businesses alike, Merton should have sought to actively engage, to encourage the widest possible response to the proposals.

Instead, it has adopted a passive approach and, seemingly, tried to keep awareness of the consultation as low as possible. As far as I am aware, the only proactive steps Merton Council has taken are to have published the consultation document on the Future Wimbledon website, followed up with a few tweets (often with rather inconsistent messages) and put two copies of the 135-page consultation document in Wimbledon library.

I raised concerns about the inadequacy of the consultation process in an email to Councillor Alambritis, G■■■■ Curran and P■■■■ McGarry dated 1 November 2018, in which I noted the following points:

"Lack of communication regarding the Masterplan: I consider that Merton Council has failed to take adequate steps to raise local awareness of the Masterplan. Planning the future of Wimbledon for the next 20 to 40 years is a once in a generation opportunity. Much more should be done to ensure that there is wide public awareness of the proposals, rather than trying to get them through "on the quiet". Currently, the approach is piecemeal. I understand that Mr McGarry has been visiting different residents' associations, for example, in private meetings. What is actually needed is a large, public meeting organised by Merton Council. It is the Council that is responsible for ensuring that reasonable steps are taken to raise awareness within the local

community - and it has resources available to allow that to be done. In my view, there should be posters and displays at public places like the library and station. Why is Merton trying to keep it so quiet? If the Council was proud of its proposals, and confident that its vision for the future of Wimbledon genuinely reflected the wishes of local residents, then, surely, it would be very actively raising awareness? In my view, steps taken by Merton Council to date do not constitute reasonable efforts to engage with a significant number of the people who will be impacted, notably local residents. It is great that Mr McGarry will be speaking at the Friends of Wimbledon Town Centre meeting on 12 November, but the capacity at that meeting will be limited. I consider that Merton Council should, itself, be organising an open meeting, in a suitably large venue, and publicising it. When does Merton Council actually plan to listen to local residents and other users of the town?

Community Forum event: As far as I am aware, to date, the sole open public event at which Mr McGarry has spoken about the Masterplan was the last Community Forum event on 27 September. I attended that meeting. Although the Masterplan was on the agenda, it was the final item on what was a very full agenda and, not surprisingly, time ran out. It was pretty clear that something as significant as the Masterplan would have merited a whole meeting to itself, so that there could be sensible engagement. There was not time to have any discussion, and Mr McGarry did little more than explain the background to the plan and outline the history of Wimbledon's development. The chair of the meeting recognised that there had been inadequate time on this item, and it was agreed that Mr McGarry would return to the December Forum event. I then specifically asked if the consultation would still be open then, and was given very clear assurances that it would be. I now find that the next Community Forum event is on Tuesday 4 December and the consultation closes on Friday 7 December. Given that many people will be working during the week, and have other demands on their time, I do not consider that this allows sufficient time for people to reflect on what Mr McGarry says and then respond in detail to the proposals. Councillor Alambritis was also at the Community Forum event so is aware of these facts.

Accessibility/inclusiveness issues: At a recent meeting organised by Stephen Hammond, some attendees indicated that they did not have internet access, and asked how they could see the Masterplan. At that stage, Stephen did not know the answer. A Merton Council tweet states "Printed copies of the Masterplan are also available to view in Wimbledon Library". The library has 2 hard copies, and staff are not sure that they can lend them out - it seems to be that people can only look at them in the library. It does not seem acceptable, or realistic, to expect people to sit in the library to read and digest the whole 135 pages. More needs to be done to ensure that people without internet access, or who do not use social media, are included in the consultation process.

Clarity of the building height information in the "Masterplan": Building height is something of particular concern to many Wimbledon residents. The colour coding for building heights (page 93) is such that, in a number of cases, it is difficult to discern exactly what is proposed. This is exacerbated in the hard copy version of the document, in which certain colours have printed out very dark. It is almost impossible to be sure what coding is used in certain locations. For example, I am very unsure whether the extended sections of the terraced streets running up from Dundonald Road are proposed to be 5 storey buildings or 2 storey buildings (which would be in keeping with the current two up two down terraces). This is an important point. I am uncertain what Merton Council actually proposes. In my view, this lack of transparency completely invalidates the consultation process to date, as it is impossible for interested residents to understand exactly what Merton Council proposes.

Transparency about who has drafted the Masterplan document/planning backdrop: I strongly consider that there should be transparency about who has drafted the Masterplan proposals. Throughout the document, it is emphasised that there is no assumption that Crossrail 2 will go ahead. If Crossrail 2 or TfL have had involvement in drafting the Masterplan, then Merton Council needs to make clear the extent of their involvement (ie the proposals they have shaped) and the role they would play in terms of the future development (for example, if

they will be undertaking over-station development themselves). If applicable, this should be clearly set out in section 5 "Creating the plan" in which you set out your "Masterplanning Journey".

I also consider that, to be completely transparent, the Masterplan document should refer to the Mayor's draft London Plan and the fact that, as I understand it, the Mayor has not identified Wimbledon as a potential Metropolitan Centre. I think that is a material detail, and don't believe that it has been mentioned.

Repeated references to "mid-rise" development: The Masterplan document states that "The townscape and topography is not suitable for high rise towers (in comparison to Nine Elms, Croydon and the City) but Wimbledon does need to become more dense and accept a moderate increase in heights to accommodate future growth". This is in a section headed "MID-RISE CONTEXTUAL ARCHITECTURE". This reference to "mid-rise" architecture is then made fairly regularly through the document. I consider that this gives a misleading impression to anyone who does not make it to page 93 (where the actual proposed building heights are set out - including a significant of buildings that are between 9 and 18 storeys high). Compared with Wimbledon as it is now (with very many two and three storey buildings), in my view, the proposed development scheme simply cannot be presented as "mid-rise".

Transparency about building height: The Mayor's draft London Plan notes "Tall buildings are generally those that are substantially taller than their surroundings and cause a significant change to the skyline". Interestingly, I note that the draft plan includes the following point "Where appropriate, visual, environmental and movement modelling/assessments should be undertaken to analyse potential design options for an area, site or development proposal. These models, particularly 3D virtual reality and other interactive digital models, should, where possible, be used to inform and engage Londoners in the planning process". Please confirm that Merton Council will be producing some 3D models, so that local residents and other interested parties can get a proper perspective on how the proposed building heights would actually impact on the town centre, and, importantly, also the

neighbouring residential streets. I consider that that is essential in order for there to be a clear and transparent consultation process."

Mr McGarry responded by email dated 22 November 2018. In his response, he stated:

"In recognising the significant interest in the plan, the Council agreed to extend the consultation period to 6 January 2019 which has allowed more time to meet more groups, more publicity via the council's online channels **and has allowed us time to publish a feature in the winter edition MyMerton which goes to every home in the borough.**"
(Emphasis added).

Today is 6 January 2019, the final day of the consultation period, and I have not yet received the winter edition of MyMerton. If other local residents have similarly not received it, that means that Merton Council has apparently failed to take any active steps to alert residents to the Masterplan Consultation.

Mr McGarry conceded the point about the lack of clarity regarding proposed building heights, stating:

"Noted, and I now appreciate the difficulties some people may have between reading the on-line and printed colour coding.

In the next draft, we will add the suggested building height number to each side to make it easier to understand.

RE: Dundonald Yards. Should the site come forward for development we've suggested the terraces could be 4 storeys.

The existing terraces are 2 (some 3 if you include loft conversions)
An example of 4 storey terraces is on p.109 and below (st Agnes Pl, Kennington)."

Whilst I recognise that Mr McGarry (and other members of his team) have attended a number of meetings, I believe that that has generally been in response to requests to meet with him (ie the approach has been to sit back and wait for others to take the initiative, rather than actively seeking to engage). As far as I am aware, by far the largest, truly public meeting was the

one organised by Friends of Wimbledon Town Centre. And, as far as I am aware, the only leafleting of local residents, seeking to raise awareness of the Masterplan consultation, was, similarly, done by Friends of Wimbledon Town Centre, by people who care about the future of the town giving up their personal time to try to raise awareness.

Merton Council has resources which would have allowed it to engage positively and pro-actively. Whilst the consultation was actually running, it invested not inconsiderable sums of money on the "drop in" sessions at St Mark's Place and outside Wimbledon theatre (which Mr McGarry recognised as being quite separate initiatives, not connected with the Masterplan). I strongly feel that the money (and time) would have been better spent increasing awareness of the Masterplan, or having drop in sessions specifically on the Masterplan proposals.

Merton Council has suggested that the workshop events indicated that people were keen to receive communications digitally. I attended a workshop meeting and do not recall that. In any event, I would make the point that, although a lot of people will be happy to look at information online, they need to receive a communication by a more direct route, alerting them that there is something online that they might want to read. The vast majority of Wimbledon residents will not be regularly looking on the Future Wimbledon website or following Councillor Alambritis on Twitter. Relying completely on a digital approach also risks marginalising some of the older members of the local community, who are equally entitled to be heard.

I found it quite telling that, at the Wimbledon Community Forum event in December, there were a considerable number of attendees who had not heard anything about the Masterplan consultation. The fact that they were at the Community Forum event shows that these were people who have an interest in community issues. The fact that even they were not aware of the consultation, does give some indication of how poorly promoted it has been.

At that meeting (attended by Mr McGarry and Councillor Whelton), attendees suggested several steps that might usefully have been adopted including:

- Displays and posters in public spaces such as Wimbledon library, Wimbledon station and the piazza.
- Provision of a shorter summary of the key proposals. A lot of people will be put off by 135 pages. In fact, the key proposals (particularly around

building heights and "districts") could be summarised in around 8 pages, which would be a lot more accessible.

I strongly consider that the passive approach adopted by Merton Council means that there has not been what could reasonably be described as an open and valid consultation.

I have three final points regarding the "consultation" process itself:

- **Timing of the consultation:** What the Masterplan can achieve will depend, in large part, on the content of the Local Plan. The Local Plan is being consulted upon in exactly the same time frame. In my view, it does not make sense for two mutually dependent documents to be consulted on at the same time. It might have made more sense, first, to consult on the Local Plan and, once that had been finalised, to consult on the Masterplan.

Having two separate consultation processes would have had additional benefits too. Local residents are currently faced with consultations on the Local Plan, the Masterplan, and the plans for extending Tramlink. This consultation "overload", over the Christmas period, reduces the likelihood of people responding, as they just feel overwhelmed by it all. Merton Council is dealing with things in work time, whilst local residents have to find time to respond on top of their day jobs and other commitments. Dealing with these issues in separate consultations that were not overlapping in time, would have avoided confusion and would, almost certainly, have increased response rates.

- **The stance adopted by senior council officials during the consultation period:** I do not think it is unreasonable to expect that, when a plan is put out for consultation, the consulting body will maintain an open mind until it has had time to review, consider and reflect on the consultation responses. If decisions had actually been made already – or if there was an unwillingness to listen to views that might be different from Merton Council's vision for "Future Wimbledon" – the consultation would be a sham. I would expect that, during the live consultation, senior officeholders of the council would retain a statesmanlike, neutral stance, and adopt a listening mode. Regrettably, instead of that, I have seen film from a council meeting during which Councillor Whelton referred to

the "nimby agenda" of residents in Wimbledon. I have also seen various tweets by Councillor Alambritis including one showing a view from the ground of towering office blocks, suggesting that that is what Wimbledon needs. Councillor Alambritis knows that a lot of local residents have voiced concern about the number of high rise buildings proposed for the town, so I consider that this might be described as inflammatory. This type of behaviour does not instil any confidence that Merton Council genuinely wants to engage with, listen to, and work with the local community.

- **Open text format for consultation responses:** In my experience, consultation response documents will usually start with a series of specific questions on which the consulting body is particularly keen to receive feedback, and then have a final open text box in which respondees can add any other points they wish to make. Including questions in this way provides a helpful steer for those responding. A lot of residents would have found it helpful to have a steer through some of the key issues, and Merton Council should have been able to identify the issues on which it was particularly keen to have feedback. For many, a blank open text box will be daunting. I find it very surprising that Merton Council was unable to identify specific points on which feedback was welcomed. It seems to have adopted a lazy approach, and an approach that suggests that it really is not that interested in hearing residents' views on any points.

2. Inadequacy of the consultation document

In my view, the current Masterplan document is flimsy and lacking in detail.

My key concerns include:

- The omission of some important details: for example, the fact that Merton Council's response to the Mayor's draft London Plan seeks to delete the requirement for evidence of demand to support speculative office development.
- Lack of clarity regarding which aspects of the proposals are dependent on Crossrail 2.
- Lack of clarity of drawings/plans included in the Masterplan. With no labelling of key landmarks, the plans set out in the Masterplan document are extremely difficult to understand. At both of the Community Forum events, and at the meeting organised by Friends of Wimbledon Town Centre (all of which were attended by Mr McGarry), it became evident that many people found the plans confusing and unclear.
- Confusing colour coding. It is extremely difficult to work out exactly what height of building is proposed for particular locations. Some of the colours used are very difficult to distinguish. The colours appear quite different in the printed and online versions of the document. For some reason, different colour codes are used in the plan showing current building heights and the plan showing proposed building heights. This makes it harder to compare the two plans, and it is difficult to understand why this has been done as it makes the proposals less transparent. I consider this lack of clarity to be an extremely serious flaw in the consultation. How can people possibly comment in detail when it is unclear exactly what is proposed? I genuinely could not work out what heights were proposed for the planned extensions of the terraces running off Dundonald Road. As noted above, Mr McGarry has conceded that the building height colour coding is unclear.

- **Inadequate detail regarding design parameters.** In my view, the current document fails to set out robust, enforceable design criteria, which would be necessary if Merton was to deliver on the promise of "high quality design". I clearly recollect a conversation I had with Councillor Alambritis, some time ago, when I referred to the redevelopment of the former Emma Hamilton pub site, and asked how Merton Council can be trusted to promote "high quality design" when development of that nature has been permitted. He told me then that Merton Council had no power to stop it. That is a telling point. Without meticulous plans, and very detailed requirements, the Masterplan will not deliver on the promise of high quality design. Therefore, it is essential that more work is done on developing the detail, and there should be further consultation once that has been done. Through an iterative process, it might be possible to establish some sensible agreed parameters and standards to be met by developers building in Wimbledon, which will provide more safeguards regarding design quality.

3. Building heights

It is striking that the one point on which really detailed work seems to have been done is in respect of building heights: proposed building heights are mapped for the whole town centre. This begs the question of whether the key objective of the Masterplan is actually to provide a mandate for allowing high rise buildings, out of all proportion with current buildings in the town centre (many of which are only two to three storeys).

Colliers Wood and Morden both starkly illustrate how detrimental high rise development can be.

During the Masterplan workshop sessions, it was notable that the valued buildings were the historic, architecturally rich buildings, which are not high rise, rather than many of the higher-rise, bulky, uninspiring and ugly more modern developments.

Both the Masterplan and the Local Plan refer to a need for denser development and more "mid-rise" buildings in Wimbledon town centre, to enable commercial growth.

Given that much of Wimbledon town centre is currently two to three storeys high, I consider the regular references to "mid-rise" buildings to be extremely misleading: page 93 of the Masterplan document shows plans for a significant number of 12 to 14 story buildings, and buildings as high as 18 storeys.

Definitions of "high-rise" and "mid-rise" may vary, but it is clear that any new buildings that are higher than 5 to 7 storeys will tower over the existing townscape and will radically alter the skyline for residents – not just those living in neighbouring streets but also those further afield.

The proposed scale and intensity of development are wholly inappropriate for Wimbledon town centre. It would adversely impact neighbouring residential areas and would change the essential character of Wimbledon, whilst exacerbating current traffic congestion and pollution issues in the town centre.

The building heights proposed in the Masterplan – particularly around St George's Road, Worple Road, parts of Hartfield Road, the station and the area around the current YMCA – are significantly higher than existing buildings and represent much more than "a moderate increase in heights".

4. Lack of evidence to support positioning Wimbledon as the leading business location in South West London

The introduction to the Masterplan includes the following statement:

"Whilst other neighbouring centres such as Croydon, Wandsworth, Kingston and Nine Elms are expanding their residential and retail offer, we believe Wimbledon is in a unique position to amplify what is already successful and to position Wimbledon SW19 as the premier business location in south west London".

This - and the detail of the Masterplan – very much suggests a focus on office development. There also seems to be an emphasis on landowners and investors, with local residents and the local community very much a secondary factor.

The Masterplan contains little or no data to justify the suggested need for a projected extra 8,000 jobs and proposed 50% increase in commercial space in the town centre. Growth in demand appears simply to be assumed, on the basis that 'if we build it, they will come'.

No account appears to have been taken of new technologies, more flexible ways of working and changing shopping patterns, which taken together are likely to reduce the demand for traditional office and retail space over the next 20 years. In my view, the Masterplan document is not "future proof", which is a real concern when it is meant to plan for the next 20 to 40 years.

The Masterplan document is littered with confident statements regarding the current demand for office space in Wimbledon. However, I note that Merton Council's response to the Mayor's draft London plan seeks to delete the need for evidence of need so as to support "speculative" office development. This is an important detail not mentioned in the draft Masterplan document, and seems to suggest that Merton Council is perhaps not quite so confident about the demand for business space.

Page 52 states "Crossrail 2 will strengthen Wimbledon's role as a major town centre and as a location with potential for speculative office development, helping to meet the Mayor's ambition to promote growth in employment in outer London centres". This suggests that the ambition for Wimbledon to be the premier office location in south west London is very much based on Crossrail 2 becoming a reality. This might not be the case, or at least not for some decades. It is not a reliable basis on which to put so much emphasis on "speculative" development.

I have spoken with a surveyor who specialises in lettings for office space. He tells me that there is currently a depressed appetite for office development in the Wimbledon area. He also tells me that there is no demand for high rise office space, as most companies do not want staff on lots of different floors.

I myself used to have to do the traditional daily commute, but now work from home most of the week. The company I work for is rationalising its office premises to just one building at Canary Wharf, and we now all "hot desk". In my view, this will become more and more common as businesses see potential to reduce their spend on office space and technological advances allow more video-conferencing and home working. This is happening in all sectors. For example, a considerable number of court premises are being sold – in part in the expectation of more video hearings in future. The Masterplan seems to

lack any real appreciation of how society is changing and, instead, seems to adopt a prosaic approach based on traditional working patterns.

5. Inconsistency regarding the emphasis for the town centre

As noted above, the overriding aspiration seems to be for Wimbledon to become the "premier business location in south west London". However, the vision set out at page 81 includes the following text:

"Wimbledon has the potential to be south west London's premier location for business, leisure, living and culture. An exemplar for good quality placemaking."

During the consultation period, Councillor Alambritis has tweeted to suggest that Wimbledon should follow Croydon's example and seek to attract a new "Westfield type" of retail development.

In my view, there is currently some confusion about what the vision for Wimbledon really is, and I think more detailed analysis is required. The Masterplan itself notes the need to be "clear on the nature of the town centre".

6. Metropolitan or Major centre?

In the Mayor of London's draft London Plan, Wimbledon is defined as a "Major Centre", with high commercial and residential growth potential.

In contrast, in the draft Masterplan, Merton Council aspires to see Wimbledon recognised as a "Metropolitan Centre". This would allow much larger scale development akin to centres like Croydon or Kingston.

I consider that this vision of Wimbledon's future is fundamentally undesirable. The town centre is bounded by residential streets on all sides, so any development needs to be moderate and sensitive to the adjacent residential areas.

I also consider that it should have been spelled out much more clearly that Merton Council's plans for the town are different to those proposed in the mayor's draft plan, and evidence to support Merton's case for a much more significant degree of development should have been provided.

7. Planning for Merton

Wimbledon is plainly seen as the "golden goose" in Merton.

I appreciate the need for the council to balance the books and to fund all of the services that it needs to provide borough-wide. However, I strongly feel that over-development of Wimbledon might well prove to be counter-productive. The Masterplan recognises that Wimbledon, as it is now, is a very successful town centre, and it serves a wide catchment area of the borough. At weekends, in particular, it is clear just how popular the town is, with a lot of people coming to the town for shopping, entertainment and dining.

I think there could be much more benefit, for the borough as a whole, in planning for more moderate growth in Wimbledon town centre and, in tandem with that, sharing some of the development opportunities with other areas of the borough. For example, the "tram triangle" is an area of potential opportunity, which could benefit from the creation of jobs and additional housing.

8. Crossrail 2: opportunity or threat?

The Masterplan presents Crossrail 2 as a huge opportunity for Wimbledon town centre, due to improved transport links. This seems to fail to recognise that Wimbledon already has uniquely excellent transport links (and that is a big draw for a lot of residents).

A serious dilemma is the complete lack of clarity about whether and, if so, when Crossrail 2 might come to the town. With a "no deal Brexit" looking increasingly likely, with the significant overspend on Crossrail 1, plus pressure to invest in transport links for the North of the country, it is entirely possible that Crossrail 2 will not materialise in the next 20, or even 40, years. So, what happens in the meantime?

The Council clearly has a duty to plan for the future of Wimbledon town centre, regardless of whether Crossrail 2 proceeds. Unfortunately, although the document states "This masterplan is not reliant on Crossrail 2", it is plain that much of the current draft is heavily dependent on Crossrail 2.

The uncertainty around the timing of Crossrail 2 means that it is a threat to harmonious, successful planning for Wimbledon town centre – as so many

areas cannot be planned for "just in case" Crossrail 2 materialises in due course.

Rather than allowing huge areas to remain "in limbo", pending something that may never happen, or may not happen for decades, I consider that Merton Council should draw up a comprehensive, detailed plan for a future Wimbledon that is not dependent on Crossrail 2.

I understand from discussions with Mr McGarry that he can quickly and easily identify the aspects of the Masterplan that are not dependent on Crossrail 2. I consider that it would be in everyone's interests for that to be done, and for that to be consulted on.

A serious issue with the current consultation document is the very real lack of clarity regarding which elements are, and are not, dependent on Crossrail 2.

As a minimum, the Masterplan should include a plan showing the areas of land safeguarded by Crossrail 2, and which would be likely to be subject to development by Crossrail 2 itself.

9. Historic buildings

The Council's workshops preceding the Masterplan and a survey by Friends of Wimbledon Town Centre both highlighted the value local residents place on Wimbledon's heritage and the real sense of community. Whilst the Masterplan acknowledges the town's rich history, it gives insufficient weight to residents' clearly expressed wish to preserve historic buildings and facades, wherever possible.

At the workshop session I attended, the Prince of Wales pub was one of the buildings that was particularly liked (as well as the library, the other "red brick" buildings such as the old post office, and the preserved façades of the old town hall and fire station), but it is notably excluded from the list of liked buildings set out in the Masterplan document.

10. Proposed extension of the terraces off Dundonald Road

As a resident of Dundonald Park, I have a particular interest in the plans for the Dundonald Yards, and for extending the terraced streets off Dundonald Road. I understand that these plans are Crossrail 2 "enabled" so are longer-term than some of the other proposals. Even so, I have concerns about the height of some of the buildings proposed for the works yard. Dundonald Park is a quiet, almost village like residential area, with a fantastic park, and

two outstanding schools. In my view it would be detrimental to over-develop the area so that its character changes. At the moment, it is an oasis, and safe area for children to play and enjoy outdoor activity. I would be concerned about the prospect of significantly increased traffic and pollution.

I also have serious misgivings about proposals to extend terraces of two-up two-down Victorian properties with 4 storey buildings. They would be totally out of keeping with the traditional Victorian terraces, which are the bedrock of housing in Wimbledon. An important aspect of terraces is the uniformity of them. Adding buildings twice the size of the existing properties at the end of the terraces would spoil the rhythm and scale of the buildings. This lack of sensitivity to the existing residential areas is a point of some concern regarding the Masterplan generally. The focus seems to be on landowners and investors rather than the local community. This fails to recognise the need for balance. If the attractiveness of Wimbledon as a place to live is reduced, then that will be bad news for the investors and landowners.

The Masterplan is dotted with references to "greening" the town. I am concerned that, if the terraces off Dundonald Road are extended with properties twice the size of the existing properties, then, eventually, there will be pressure to further extend Dundonald Primary School and/or Wimbledon Chase, which might actually result in a net loss of green space.

I also wonder if anyone has actually visited the terraces off Dundonald Road. They are narrow streets, with huge pressure on parking spaces already. I really cannot see that extending them in the manner proposed will be a positive development for the local area or that the streets can accommodate the additional traffic that would be generated. Thought also needs to be given to the infrastructure investment required. It is already extremely difficult to get GP appointments in this area, for example.

11.An alternative vision for the town?

The Masterplan places some emphasis on the "Wimbledon" "brand", referring to the world-renowned tennis tournament, a number of cultural events, and "high end" Wimbledon Village.

Rather than placing so much emphasis on high rise office development (which seems high risk when working patterns are already shifting), my vision for the town is for mixed use: combining moderate business growth, "aspirational" design, encouragement for independent retail, plus some residential development (even though that will clearly necessitate some investment in infrastructure).

The Masterplan expresses a wish to attract higher end hotels.

Although, originally, I was slightly sceptical about the plans for a new concert hall in Wimbledon Town centre, increasingly, I feel that that could be something that might help to set Wimbledon apart, encourage more innovative and high quality design, and make it a real destination. I understand that there have been long-term discussions over the possibility of a concert hall on the P3 (Morrisons car park site). I hope that Merton Council will give careful thought to this (provided adequate car parking is also included) as something that could really benefit the whole borough.

A world-class performance venue would be a huge asset to the cultural life of Wimbledon. It would also help to attract visitors and businesses to Wimbledon, increase the number of overnight stays and boost overall economic activity. The Council should give the Concert Hall proposal more enthusiastic support and more prominence in the Masterplan.