

Clark .S

To whom it may concern,

Response to the Local Plan for Wimbledon - Policy N3.6

I would like to outline below my objections and suggestions to the Council's Local Plan for Wimbledon.

In Summary:

I chose to move to Wimbledon because of the area's exceptional qualities as a place to live. The Local Plan's emphasis on transforming the town into a business hub is fundamentally misguided. The town centre is bounded by residential streets on all sides, making large scale redevelopment problematic. Residents have made it very clear, that they do not want Wimbledon town centre to become a "mini Croydon".

The proposed scale and intensity of development are wholly inappropriate for Wimbledon town centre. They 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.

Key objections and concerns:

- J I do not want Wimbledon to become another East Croydon and it should not be compared to or used as a template for future town planning. It's hardly something to aspire to, to turn Wimbledon into the high rise, concrete jungle, void of character that is East Croydon. There must be other town centres that have a good mix of both residential and business use, which still maintain the character and community feel of the area. I suggest the Council research further to explore other areas which have a successful mix of both and that would be a better comparison template for the future vision for Wimbledon.
- J I oppose construction of buildings of up to 18 floors, clearly out of keeping with the needs of the area. 18 storey buildings are definitely not mid-rise, as have been referred to in the Local Plan.
- J It is imperative to preserve what remains of the historic buildings in the town centre.
- J A greater amount of green, traffic-free space in the town centre would be beneficial. Re-directing traffic away or around certain parts of the Broadway would make it a more enjoyable pedestrianised zone. This road just gets busier and busier every year, clogged with traffic, particularly around the station.

Building design and materials:

To date, ugly and piecemeal building design, poorly overseen by the Council, has already created numerous blights on the town. I strongly support the adoption of a strict design quality regime, enforced by local laws, in order to raise the overall merit of new construction throughout Wimbledon, thus creating a more unified and visually pleasing town centre. i.e. using building materials sympathetic with the area and the area's history, such as London stock brick, Portland stone and natural materials in muted, neutral and earthy colours.

Building Height Restrictions:

I believe that the Local Plan should state unequivocally that new buildings in excess of 7-8 storeys are unlikely to receive planning approval because of their visual impact on the surrounding area, their incongruity with existing historic buildings and the increase in traffic congestion and pollution to which more intense development would inevitably lead.

The Council should adopt a formula whereby it permits the lesser of a % increase in the height of the current building and a cap; and the formula should apply to buildings which are shown in the plan as intended to be more than 4 storeys high. For example, with a maximum 50% increase in height with a cap of 8 storeys, i.e.:

-) Any building on the plan proposed to be up to 4 storeys high stays as it is.
-) Any current 3 storey building, other than those included in the point above, could become 6 storeys, 4 could become 8, but 5 could only be 8 as well.

Wimbledon Concert Hall:

As part of the future town plan, I believe that the Council should 100% be backing the campaign for construction of a concert hall and arts centre in central Wimbledon (with provision for parking in a basement level beneath the hall) in order to strengthen the town's cultural offering. This would be a wonderful addition to the great culture and events we already have, in the form of the many local Theatres within the town (New Wimbledon Theatre, New Wimbledon Studio and the Polka Theatre). A world-class performance venue would be a huge asset and Wimbledon could indeed become known as a real cultural hub and "go to" place for the arts within London. It would also help to attract visitors and businesses to Wimbledon, increase the number of overnight stays and boost overall economic activity.

Wimbledon Society's Blueprint:

The Council should take note of the Wimbledon Society's own blueprint for the future of the town, which in very practical, thoughtful ways deals with many of the challenges that will face the town. Particularly the way the Society's vision successfully unites existing streets and new open spaces, especially near the station, while also erasing the unattractive red-brick and other synthetic material "boxes" authorised for construction in past decades.

Heritage and Historic Buildings:

Wimbledon's heritage and sense of community are highly valued by residents. Whilst the Local Plan acknowledges the town's rich history, it gives insufficient weight to residents' clearly expressed wish to preserve historic buildings and facades wherever possible.

I hope the Council takes these comments on board from the community, and I look forward to seeing a revised Local Plan in the near future that takes into account the above suggestions and feedback.