

[REDACTED]

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**From:** Councillor Nigel Benbow  
**Sent:** 08 January 2019 15:45  
**To:** P [REDACTED] McGarry [REDACTED]  
**Cc:** T [REDACTED] Butler [REDACTED]  
**Subject:** Future Wimbledon Masterplan & Local Plan Representation Letter

Dear P [REDACTED],

I hope you will accept my submission of the 'Future Wimbledon Masterplan & Local Plan' representation letter which is attached to this email.

I understand that an extension has been given for the Local Plan until the 28<sup>th</sup> January, therefore I may send you and T [REDACTED] a revised representation letter at a later date.

I would be most grateful if you (and T [REDACTED]) could send me acknowledgement for receiving my representation letter.

Many thanks.

With best wishes,

Nigel.

**Councillor Nigel Benbow**  
**Abbey Ward - South Wimbledon (Conservatives)**

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**37B KINGSTON ROAD, WIMBLEDON, SW19 1JW**

P■■ McGarry, Esq.,

Head of Future Merton

London Borough of Merton Council

CC. T■■ Butler

6<sup>th</sup> January 2019

**FUTURE WIMBLEDON MASTERPLAN  
& LOCAL PLAN SOUTH WIMBLEDON – REPRESENTATION LETTER**

Dear P■■

Having had time to read your consultation report (October 2018) on Future Wimbledon Masterplan, Local Plan (South Wimbledon) and also attended many of your presentations, I still have grave concerns on a number of issues, particularly the risk of changing the landscapes blighted by tall storey block buildings and trapped air pollution.

Wimbledon is a unique, special residential town centre, that attracts thousands of tourists every year to see the Wimbledon Championships. A famous SW19 town that should continue to ‘stand out from the crowd’, comparing to other town centres across London. We should be proud of this.

Yes, Wimbledon ideally needs to be freshened and updated, but heritage buildings must be preserved for future generations. There’s an excellent opportunity with the forthcoming Cross Rail Two project (if goes ahead) but careful consideration must be taken how this can be built with minimum effect on the town centre.

However, Wimbledon does not deserve to be transformed into a business hub centre, with high storey buildings that many local residents are totally against. It should not be used as a ‘cash cow’ centre. This is a real risk and could spoil Wimbledon before anyone realises the real full impact. Why is there a need to turn Wimbledon into a business hub centre? I understand and read somewhere that Wimbledon is one of the highest business occupiers, however, there’s a real danger that Wimbledon could become another ‘Croydon Metropolis’. I am not in favour of this and I strongly urge you and your team to listen to the residents of Wimbledon.

I fear the Council’s administration will once again have an upper hand when it comes to planning application meeting to decide the final outline on the future of Wimbledon town centre.

I am in favour of Wimbledon to be built at a lower height and less compactness that has been the talk of the Future Wimbledon Masterplan. Wimbledon must be ambitious with a focus on quality and landscape of the town centre and this must include the quality of design and material which is vital to any redevelopment.

Wimbledon must always require architecture, design and planning standards that are based on first-class design quality and require the use of high quality appealingly pleasing and sustainable materials. The design must show respect for (and enhance and restore) Merton’s Heritage Character and History. Modern design and architecture may be approved where this is of the highest aesthetic quality such that its appearance gives back to our community. I echo these comments should apply for the entire Borough, including South Wimbledon, which is my ward area.

I must stress there are strong objections to the new storey buildings being built at a greater height than at present. This clearly demonstrates that once again, residents are being failed to be listened, especially their own concerns and this does not provide solutions to the infrastructure required for the town centre expansion. Residents would like to see development proposals with lower storey heights, ensuring the heritage of Wimbledon is kept, enhance it in a natural way without being overbearing by new blocks, such as other developments happening in South Wimbledon – on Morden Road, also the new Premier Inn on Broadway. This has proved to be vastly unpopular to the residents living nearby, blocking natural sunlight to their gardens. An example, many are against to the suggestion that the current YMCA building at the end of Broadway can be redeveloped at a greater height. Therefore, the regeneration of Wimbledon town centre must be done in an architecturally sensitive fashion, that takes account of heritage buildings and character of Wimbledon.

High rising buildings must be limited or preferably avoided in Merton. Otherwise, it would mean changing to Wimbledon's landscape and overseeing community open spaces residential gardens, causing the invasion of residents' privacy.

On a positive note, there is a chance to create exciting architecture features such as laneways between the main streets which can attract local small businesses and believe that it would help to give a localism feel to Wimbledon. This is a great opportunity to provide a greater range of employment opportunities in the area as well as increasing the number of shops and restaurants for the local community.

Not just Wimbledon, but also for South Wimbledon, I am very concerned about the potential effects of air quality and pollution and this must be considered carefully how can this be prevented. Extreme measures may have to be taken into places, such as trees and plants that absorb the highest amount of CO2 and other dangerous emissions. Workable solutions must be found for heavy congestion at all hours, and I acknowledge that the Masterplan has included the need for a greener Wimbledon at its heart.

With regards to local plan in my ward, I fully welcome that the Council is "proposing a new local centre at the heart of the South Wimbledon, focused around the underground station and South Wimbledon junction", as well as encouraging small local businesses into the area, which is well overdue.

As a local Councillor for Abbey Ward (South Wimbledon), I am also a resident living in the core of South Wimbledon for over fifteen years and I have witnessed many worrying issues.

Sadly, I have seen absolutely no noticeable improvements made in South Wimbledon since moving to the area. Improvements are badly needed to update the poorly organised and out-of-date South Wimbledon junction. It remains difficult and inefficient, and above all, very dangerous for pedestrians. Regeneration of the High Path Estate underlines the urgent need to improve the junction for the increased population. Adding that to the present narrow pavements, dangerous crossing and complex traffic flows would be a disaster we can and should avoid.

South Wimbledon was once a thriving high street however now feels unsure of its place, worn out, neglected and congested. For example, Nelson Wines, on Merton High Street, a rare unique off-license has sadly closed down due to a decline in trading in the recent few years. Unique businesses should have been protected. We must use the opportunity to improve the area by reinvesting local businesses and strengthen the identity of a place with rich local history.

There are so many great things about living locally but we believe there are also things that could be so much better – cleaner streets, protect the weekly bin collection, less traffic congestion and air pollution.

I want to see South Wimbledon become a thriving area again with more small local businesses, stretching from Kingston Road to Abbey Parade, via Merton High Street, and Merton Road to Morden Road. These places could have more restaurants, butchers, bakers or designer clothes shops.

Priority must be given to encourage and enhancement of small local businesses with the highest quality and appealing character. They should also be supported by a clear '30-minute stop-and-shop' parking on available spaces. A proper allocation of car parking zones must be provided for people to visit South Wimbledon to create a thriving and safe environment.

New developments should be welcomed into the area but maintaining South Wimbledon's unique landscape and preserving our remaining heritage buildings. We have recently lost a well-used beloved Merton Hall on Kingston Road, and The Rose Cottage on Hamilton Road, which was one of the oldest buildings in South Wimbledon, that has been part of the fabric of our area for the last two centuries and was built during Lord Nelson's residency.

There are already plans in place – 'Neighbourhood' and 'South Wimbledon Enhancement' Plans to guide future development and give the local residents a stronger voice on how development is used to improve the South Wimbledon area. These plans must be fully supported by the Council.

Recently, the Planning Application Committee has approved both the High Path Regeneration (but with 18% affordable housing, rather than 40% as initially promised) and also the new secondary school on a tiny plot of land, accommodating over 1,150 pupils and 130 staff. This is certainly worrying with a potential impact on the local surroundings, the High Path regeneration for the next 15 years, and of course, the air pollution.

I see daily heavily congested traffic at South Wimbledon junction. Hence, I am hugely concerned about the impact of having a secondary school in the South Wimbledon area. Rather than turning a 'blind-eye', I genuinely believe if you all had lived in the area and witnessed the daily increased congested South Wimbledon junction, I would have absolutely no doubt that you would agree on that the location of the proposed school is highly unsuitable for the children and wouldn't be a particularly safe location either, given the proposed redevelopment of the High Path Estate. I fear not many people have a great understanding of the effects on toxic air quality to the residents.

It must be noted from a recent 'Air-Quality' report audited by the Mayor of London (May 2018), that Merton Abbey Primary School is listed as one of 50 worst polluted schools in London, not just Merton. It is attended by some of the borough's most vulnerable children.

It would be disastrous for a new school to effectively serve only High Path residents living in this traffic locked area. To achieve this objective the school site needs easy open access and communication to the west, to the extensive South Wimbledon and Merton Park residential areas, plus safe access to the underground and buses at the South Wimbledon centre. This requires essential changes and improvements to the South Wimbledon junction and alternative traffic plans.

Also, the High Path Estate is surrounded with the South Wimbledon tube station junction, Sainsbury's hypermarket to the east, Merantun Way and Merton High Street to the north, is ringed by main roads which carry intense flows of commercial traffic and this has created a traffic locked 'island'. It is essential to relieve and 'open' this ring at the west South Wimbledon end, to make

pedestrian access safer and user-friendly with the High Path Regeneration. At present, pedestrians have to compete with intense commercial traffic and turning buses to access the tube station and bus stops on narrow pavements. Very many potential school parents would boycott an ill-advised proposed school at High Path, risking to send their children via the present dangerous South Wimbledon junction.

An improved North-South link is already urgently needed to serve the commercial vehicle route from Haydons Road to both the extensive industrial area on the south side of Merantun Way and to Morden and the A217/M25 main route. At present this traffic flow negotiates via the South Wimbledon junction.

It would then be possible to remove commercial traffic from the section between Merantun and the South Wimbledon junction on the Morden Road by width restrictions; this section would then become a 'local road' with bus-only lanes. There is also the potential for a bus lane with a bus-stop to circle behind the underground station for buses coming from the East which currently cross traffic lanes to turn right into the Morden Road adding complexity and frequent intrusion into the pedestrian sequence of the lights. Such improvements would remove a great deal of congestion and danger from the South Wimbledon junction and make access between the South Wimbledon and Merton Park more open and safer. Similar improvements should be imperative to partner the proposed High Path Regeneration, both enabled and partly funded by a mandatory contribution from both applicants.

Problems about rat-runs through Abbey Road, Dane/Mill Roads and Cecil/Balfour Roads are well known, which badly needs to be resolved by the improvements to South Wimbledon junction. Neighbourhood roads will be invaded with vehicles rat running in the surrounding streets and congestion at the South Wimbledon junction is likely to increase and non-residents' vehicles parking due to lack of parking spaces. Hence causing more parking issues. Why have the Council not tried to sort out the Abbey Road rat run as part of the High Path Regeneration? The Labour administration could have made that a requirement of Clarion being allowed to proceed but they failed to do so. The majority of the residents are increasingly unhappy and are against the idea.

Tall blocks of buildings recently built/revamped along Morden Road, like Madison Heights, Spur House and potentially Barclays Bank - which was recently closed and bound to be redeveloped into another tall block. Hence trapping the traffic air pollution with new tall High Path Regeneration building blocks on the other side of Morden Road.

Potential Tram extension from Sutton to South Wimbledon - ongoing consultation TfL project. Potentially built along Morden Road and a negative impact on Nelson Gardens, if the proposed tram stop is built there.

All the above concerns will cause a massive increase in congestion and pollution in South Wimbledon. I am deeply concerned that the Merton Council are once again failing to listen to the local residents in South Wimbledon but trying to hide the obvious clear facts about the serious threat to the health of pupils which came to light from the London Mayor's report last May, which is well after the school planning commenced some years ago. The Merton Council chose to ignore this and push ahead with their school plans in the "most polluted area" in Merton.

The evidence is now increasingly being heard, and I am urging you all to start thinking outside the box. Essentially, Merton Abbey Primary school must be protected. Safe road zones around schools must be prioritised, with anti-engine idling schemes on all busy polluted roads. Considering the

facts, I raised above, I do not wish to see dramatic increasingly toxic air pollution in South Wimbledon, and also in the whole borough of Merton.

The improvement of air quality must be a priority in every planning approval, with neutral impact developments only being allowed by exception and after ensuring strong greening measures. Strict ongoing monitoring must be carried out at all locations of poor air quality with the regular publication of relevant data, clearly set out for ease of quick reference by residents. Urban greening, plantings and an increase in tree cover must be encouraged, with the use also of planters, rain gardens, living walls and other green infrastructure, as well as the protection and restoration of pocket parks. The proposed new secondary school at High Path must be fully consulted on with the public and residents and any decision must take into consideration the views of all groups on the Council. Further new school sites should not be approved at busy roads suffering poor air quality.

I am strongly in favour that the Council is increasingly encouraging the growth of electric vehicles across the borough, including buses and taxis being switched to electric vehicles or renewable energy-based provision. However, far more work must be done to encourage residents to switch to electric vehicles.

More cycling routes and quiet paths must be developed along with safer pedestrian walking routes must be considered.

Lack of public parking remains a problem, especially for local businesses, however, residential parking remains a higher priority. Building tall blocks of residential homes causes more problems for parking spaces. How can this be resolved and what happens when the High Path Regeneration is completed, with an extra thousand residents living there?

Many thanks.

With best wishes,

Nigel.

Nigel Benbow

Councillor for Abbey Ward (South Wimbledon)