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DRAFT LOCAL PLAN CONSULTATION RESPONSE

I fully support everything in the response from XXXXXX on behalf of the Battles Area Residents Association, unless a different view is detailed below. In addition, I have included other comments.

SOUTH WIMBLEDON LOCAL CENTRE

I am delighted to see South Wimbledon being nominated as a Local Centre. There is a great deal of history and nature in this area that needs greater recognition and preservation.

I have suggested boundaries for the Local Centre based on Tara Butler's presentations to the public where it was stated that the Local Centre needs to be relatively compact so that funding for improvements is not spread too thinly. However, I am concerned about the other valued small shops outside the Local Centre boundary such as those further along Kingston Road and Merton Road which will now be in some sort of no man's land.

Suggested boundaries for the Local Centre on the basis that funding must not be spread too thinly:

North: Merton Road – no 177 on the west side (Timeless Upholstery) and no 228 on the east side (Takahashi Restaurant).

South: Morden Road – no 2 on the west side (Costa Coffee) and Kendall Self Drive on the east side. This excludes the two new(ish) developments on Kingston Road – Spur House and Madison Heights. These are examples of appalling modern developments which do not fit with the area. Spur House already looks shabby and has done so almost from the moment it was completed. These buildings should serve as a reminder of poor planning/development in the hope that other developments in the area will be better.

East: Merton High Street – no 128 on the north side (Bargain Store) and the end of the High Path Estate on the south side (up to no 21 Merton High St). Including the High Path Estate on the south side of Merton High Street should give the opportunity to influence the design of the buildings and frontage along Merton High Street during the regeneration. If this is not possible, then the boundary on the south side of Merton High Street should be the Kilkenny Pub.

West: Kingston Road – no 33 on the north side (Johnson Crilly Solicitors) and no 20 on the south side (Evolve Housing).

The buildings on the four corners of the South Wimbledon junction – ie South Wimbledon Station, Bank House, Tesco Express and Dallas Chicken & Ribs – should be preserved as each is a carefully designed landmark building in its own right, giving a presence to each corner of the junction.

Nelson Gardens is a valuable piece of open space that should be enhanced and better signposted/promoted. With the huge development of the High Path Estate, there will likely be shortage of open space even with the planned central park and Nelson Gardens will be a hugely important and valuable asset especially as it is located at one corner of the High Path Estate and will therefore be the nearest easily accessible green space for a large number of people.

The character of the area should be maintained with new developments incorporating at least elements of the Victorian and Edwardian buildings of the area. A local example of such a development is one on Station Road next to the River Wandle which has curved windows with brick detailing emulating traditional buildings in the area. This shows that such development is possible and that the move to brutalism with rectangular buildings of harsh lines, lack of human scale and lack of detailing is not the only option.

I disagree with the draft Local Plan statement: 3.5.3 “and these design standards are occasionally reflected on Merton High Street and Kingston Road.” (Unless I misunderstand this statement.)

If you look at the parades of buildings, especially on the north side of Merton High Street in South Wimbledon, each parade has its own distinctive design features and detailing. These are mainly Victorian or Edwardian parades and are very attractive due to these very details and features. There are often more distinctive corner buildings on the corners of the battles roads with Merton High Street. This is character worth preserving and encouraging with new developments as appropriate.

I recently heard a lecturer in urban design and city planning from a top UK university describe Colliers Wood as a 'clusterfxxk' (apologies for the language – that was the exact word used) referring to the residential developments, historical assets, retail outlet areas, River Wandle and natural environment etc. It is essential that the same does not happen to South Wimbledon. I welcome an emphasis on place-making and design in the draft local plan especially with regard to the above paragraph and ensuring this sort of development does not happen again anywhere in the borough.

3.5.11 Requiring other local developments to refer to Clarion Housing to co-ordinate site designs and materials. Surely, this should also make reference to the existing Victorian and Edwardian housing in the neighbourhood some of which is directly opposite the borders of the High Path Estate (eg Merton High Street, Morden Road, Abbey Road). If local residents fail to persuade Clarion to design more attractive buildings more fitting for the location, this is giving open reign to other developers to further decimate the character of the area... potentially resulting in another 'clusterfxxk' as described above with regard to Colliers Wood.

With regard to tall buildings, anything in the local centre above six storeys is a tall building including those on High Path Estate.

TRANSPORT

To encourage walking, all pelican crossings should change immediately the button is pressed to allow those on foot to cross the road. This is needed to make it less convenient for car users and enhance the experience for pedestrians. Until it will be quicker to walk a short distance than drive, people will continue to use their cars.

The myth that pelican crossings are often synchronised to nearby traffic lights seems to be a myth from my experience, especially in the South Wimbledon area.

To encourage cycling, cycle paths must be better thought out.

Three poorly executed local examples are:-

1. The cycle path on Merton High Street that shares the southern pavement with pedestrians. There is no visible stop for cyclists at pelican crossings when pedestrians get the green light to cross the road. There are frequent near misses as pedestrians mounting the pavement are not aware cyclists are approaching and cyclists are not aware the pelican crossing has changed to allow pedestrians to cross the road.

The abrupt end of the cycle lane near the Kilkenny Pub is also ill-thought out. It means cyclists have to either suddenly join a busy vehicular junction or they continue on the pavement which is dangerous for pedestrians.

2. The cycle path on Merantun Way from Premier Inn to Merton Abbey Mills roundabout. This cycle path suddenly stops and starts again midway between these locations. I don't know if this was due to re-tarmacking of the pavement, bad planning or something else. There are no dips in the kerb for cyclists to join/leave the road for this small stretch. What are they meant to do?

3. The cycle path passing Britannia Point (formerly the Brown & Root Tower) is very windy and cyclists struggle not to be blown into the path of vehicles when passing this building.

Cycle paths and pedestrian routes should be located away from busy, main roads wherever possible to protect from pollution inhalation and for safety.

Maintain as many green, open spaces of all sizes as possible so that pedestrians and cyclists can use these spaces as part of their journey, however short or long – creating a green corridor for journeys. Maintain these spaces in good condition including the removal of fly-tipping and litter and the provision of public bins.

Pavements, footpaths, roads and street lighting need to be improved for pedestrians and cyclists to be feel safe. Just walking in the residential streets of south Wimbledon in the dark, I often walk on the road to:

- feel safe
- see where I am going
- not trip over uneven pavements (often but not exclusively due to tree roots)
- see potholes
- not slip on wet leaves
- not trip over fly-tips on pavements nor walk in litter that has blown around (especially from uncovered recycle boxes and dropped refuse from refuse collections).

The nonsense that is the PTAL rating for development density has to stop! Assuming that good transport links mean housing density can be greater, leads to greater demand on the already overcrowded transport links. This does not encourage people to use public transport and makes it even more difficult for people at stops further along the line to get onto public transport – these locations have their own increase in housing density based on their own PTAL rating. Take the Northern Line as an example. There is a proposed redevelopment of Morden town centre which will hugely increase the housing density. The High Path Estate regeneration at South Wimbledon, on it's own, will hugely increase housing density. Colliers Wood has seen several developments of large blocks of flats and no doubt more are/will be planned. Other boroughs are also under extreme pressure to provide more housing and use the same PTAL approach. All this means that for those

using the Northern Line, it will start to become virtually impossible, for example, to get on the tube in the morning rush hour beyond Morden or South Wimbledon. There needs to be much greater encouragement for businesses to set up locally and employ local people to remove the need for long journeys.

Healthy streets will not be healthy streets unless pollution decreases substantially or smaller streets with cafes, small shops, eateries etc are only for the use of pedestrians and cyclists for all, most or part of the day. It should be possible to make such streets traffic free for at least part of the day so that users can enjoy the outdoor space. It is not healthy or pleasant to sit outside a cafe or in an open space right beside traffic on a polluted road.

No additional drive through fast food establishments should be allowed and those in existence should be encouraged to change – in order to discourage people from driving unnecessarily and to prevent idling whilst waiting for their food.

Secure public cycle parking is essential to enable people to feel confident in leaving their bicycles for short or long periods of time thus encouraging people to eg go shopping on their bicycles.

DEVELOPMENT

The construction industry contributes hugely to poor air quality and to landfill.

Reasons to encourage the renovation of existing buildings as opposed to the demolition and rebuild, especially where such buildings do not have any structural defects.

Existing buildings can be enlarged, for example, by retaining at least the front face/section of the buildings and extending at the rear.

Green space especially rear gardens are hugely important to the mental welfare of occupants, providing an outdoor space protected from pollution at the front of the buildings and creating a green corridor for wildlife. Front gardens or defensible space should be a requirement of all buildings – residential and commercial.

Thought should be put into where is appropriate to locate residential properties with regard to traffic and air pollution. Poor air quality hot spots beside busy roads and junctions should not be used for residential properties, schools, hospitals/health centres etc so as not to subject vulnerable groups to poor air quality for many hours of the day/night.

METROPOLITAN OPEN LAND

MOL together with all open spaces should be protected from development. With increasing housing numbers comes an increase in demand for open spaces, community centres etc. Therefore, any existing open spaces will be desperately needed in the future. Once gone, they are gone forever.

COLLIERS WOOD

As stated in comments on transport, the Britannia Point building creates a strong wind effect making it difficult and dangerous for cyclist on the cycle path passing this building. The new plaza/piazza/town square at the base of this building has whirlwinds of litter flying in circles.

This demonstrates some of the microclimate and wind effects that can be created by tall buildings.

Action should be taken to resolve this problem around Britannia Point and take great care when allowing other tall buildings to be developed – not just in Colliers Wood.

3.1.20 needs to be stronger with regard to this issue.

The valued historic aspects of Colliers Wood including Merton Abbey Mills and the walls of the priory (to mention just two) are not publicised, promoted or cared for enough. This does not engender pride in these historic assets. (This is referenced to some extent in 3.1.22)

Site CW3 – Essential to maintain a community centre here. There is a erosion of community centres and community space. With the increase in housing density comes a need for more community space not less.

WANDLE VALLEY REGIONAL PARK and other OPEN SPACES

Problems of litter and fly-tipping must be tackled to protect the natural environment, the open space, the River Wandle and it's tributaries, and wildlife.

Public bins should be placed in accessible locations, so that open space users especially dog owners/walkers have somewhere to put their dog poo bags and other rubbish. These bins must be emptied regularly and frequently. Putting them at open space entrances would be sensible locations.

See comments above relating to Transport – ie open spaces providing a corridor for pedestrians and cyclists.

PUBLIC REALM

With regard to tree planting, attention should be paid to not plant trees that drop sticky sap or other secretions making pavements slippery.

ADVERTISEMENTS

Advertising should not be distracting to drivers and road users.

Pavement space should not be reduced or inconvenienced by advertising.

Priority should be given to safety of road users and convenience and lines of sight for pavement users.

WASTE MANAGEMENT

A huge improvement in the performance and operation of Veolia is required to return Merton to the pleasant borough it has been to live in until the last couple of years.

With the increasing density of housing proposed across the borough, waste management will be come even more challenging.

This needs to be managed and supervised properly to ensure a good service is being provided.

LEISURE, SPORT & RECREATION

Return the tennis courts in Haydons Road Recreation Ground to MUGAs for community use (O8.5ii).

Do not allow sites such as Battle Close to change from Fitness Centre or other sports facility/activities.

MANAGING FLOOD RISK

Ensure street drain covers are kept clear of leaf litter and debris to prevent surface flooding of roads during/after heavy rain.

WIMBLEDON

Heights should be restricted to maintain the character of Wimbledon and Wimbledon town centre.

As seen by Britannia Point at Colliers Wood, tall buildings create all sorts of microclimate issues including wind effects, wind tunnels, canyon effect trapping pollution, shading making pavements and roads cold and icy in winter, to mention just a few.

Human scale, detailing, curves, grace and gentleness contribute to the feeling of safety and attractiveness of a location. This will be lost / not regained by development of excessively high buildings. To attract more visitors and make Wimbledon a destination for more than two weeks a year, it must have something special to offer, not just high rise buildings with little to offer visually/aesthetically.

Site Wi5 – Concert Hall and maybe art gallery, to complement the other arts offerings ie Wimbledon Theatre, Polka Theatre. And provide an additional venue for the many cultural events occurring throughout the year in the Wimbledon vicinity and Merton. This could draw large numbers of visitors to the area enhancing the economy.

Site Wi8 – South Wimbledon Station – any development above the station must be restricted in height to not conflict or overpower the other landmark buildings on each corner of the South Wimbledon junction. The roads at this junction are not wide and the space will easily feel closed in and claustrophobic and making it unpleasant for pedestrians and other users. Microclimate and wind effects are likely to be created by developing to height above the station.

Site Wi9 – should incorporate some community space to replace that lost from previous usage.

Site Wi10 – height should be restricted to appropriate height as for all buildings in Wimbledon, even on St George's Rd.

Site Wi15 – YMCA – Height should be restricted/maintained at the height of the current building to maintain the integrity of the Broadway, prevent microclimate effects such as wind (as has occurred at Britannia Point).