

[REDACTED]

From: H [REDACTED] England [REDACTED]
Sent: 05 January 2019 20:01
To: Future Merton
Cc: Councillor Thomas Barlow; Councillor Andrew Howard; Councillor Najeeb Latif; A [REDACTED] England
Subject: Objection to Master Plan / Local Plan

Dear Sir/Madam

Please take note of our objections to the Master-/Local Plan and the individual reasons as follows:

A Rationale for Masterplan

The Masterplan as proposed looks like a fantasma. **There is no evidence that 8,000 additional jobs will materialise** plus 50% of increase in commercial space - actually looking at the centre court now it's a sad story how shops are persevering (or not) and there's no support from the Council at all.

Tomorrow's world will be characterised by intimate/characterful and individually designed environments, key shopping will be done online, people will work more from home - new commercial spaces will have to be equally individualistic and non-scale driven in height or mass. **We do not want to create ghost town centres** based on wishful thinking and baseless assumptions.

What will attract more people to Wimbledon and the town centre is culturally distinct choices including great architecture plus the availability of green spaces, populated with trees (also distinctly absent today). **The plan completely misses any environmentally or socially beneficial perspective for residents** and as such will not be able to attract any additional commercial businesses - even if it were needed.

The Council's failure to show child- and cyclist-friendly infrastructure is another example of the Masterplan completely missing out on future-proof requirements of the local society.

The Masterplan also fails completely to take into account the impact of Crossrail II which will be the driver for any new planning project in Wimbledon given its huge implications and budget for transport, accessibility, parking arrangements and broader logistical alignments.

On a secondary note, driverless cars, community arrangements for travel, electric vehicles etc will all have a major impact on any future scheme and density assumptions around the aforementioned.

B Integration of Crossrail II

The Council has a duty to plan for the future of Wimbledon town centre, regardless of whether the Crossrail 2 project proceeds. **But it is surely wrong to claim, as the Masterplan does, that "This masterplan is not reliant on Crossrail II".**

In reality, the levels of investment needed to develop Wimbledon in line with **the Masterplan's vision are heavily dependent on Crossrail II** going ahead. For example, the Masterplan itself says that there is little scope to deal with the traffic problems in the town centre or to pedestrianise streets without new railway crossings to relieve the pressure on Wimbledon Bridge.

C Buildings in high blocks

In today and tomorrow's world residents and professional workers do not want to have an environment of tall buildings. The Council has failed to understand that this is a historical concept where across Britain and Europe

planning activities have progressively been looking to tear down such structures. **The segregation between work and home environments will be far less pronounced in the future and thus commercial arrangements - and accompanying architecture - will need to be moulded more on home-like environments as opposed to separate soulless cubicles or spaces amassed in blocks and floors next to and above each other.**

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. These could be up to 18 storeys high.

The proposed Plan is therefore wholly inappropriate for Wimbledon town centre. Buildings exceeding 7-8 stories will simply tower over the existing architecture and change the perception of Wimbledon indefinitely. Indeed, one of the advantages of the town centre is the absence of high rise buildings. In addition, any new high structures would adversely impact neighbouring residential areas and would change the essential character and quality of life in Wimbledon, whilst causing further traffic congestion and pollution issues in the town centre.

D Wimbledon as major or metropolitan centre?

The Mayor of London's draft London Plan, has already defined Wimbledon as a "Major Centre", with high commercial and residential growth potential.

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

We strongly object to the vision of recreating a metropolitan centre in Wimbledon in the form of a secondary Kingston or Croydon. The towns of Kingston and Croydon are not good examples and have massive issues of incoherence to combat of their own. Because of the inherent problems of unsuccessful and fragmented integration of residential and commercial spaces there these locations have grown to be far from being desirable areas to live in or to go to. This is something we must avoid to recreate in Wimbledon and the Council urgently needs to learn from these suboptimal examples rather than simply copying what's there.

E Historic environment as existing

Even the Council's own workshops in the lead-up to the Masterplan as well as additional surveys carried out on behalf of residents proved that Wimbledon's heritage and sense of community are highly valued by people living here. On one hand the council's Masterplan acknowledges the town's rich history but then **it gives insufficient weight to residents' clearly expressed wishes to preserve the historic buildings** and facades wherever possible. This is yet more proof for the incoherence of the Masterplan.

F New concert and/or cultural venue hall

The Masterplan mentions (page 71) plans that were developed by the Wimbledon Concert Hall Trust for a new performance venue in central Wimbledon. An obvious location would be the Council car park next to Morrisons, but the Council has yet to give its backing to this use of the site.

A world-class performance venue would be a huge asset to Wimbledon and its cultural life. 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. It's extremely disappointing that there's not enough recognition about cultural education and its value for a community within the Council's own ranks.

G Consultation process

The consultation process for both the Masterplan and the Local Plan has been inadequate. Given their importance to everyone who lives and works in Wimbledon, it is not enough simply to publish the documents on the Council's website and place hard copies in libraries. With such 'passive' methods of communication, most residents are likely to remain in ignorance. **The accountability and due diligence process for consultations within LGB's Council appears to be non-existent** and this is just another example.

As on previous occasions, the Council has held consultations with a limited or unrelated group of residents instead of being proactive and writing to all residents at their home addresses as they have proven to be able to do on other occasions, e.g. for voting purposes. There were also no pop-up information stands in the Piazza or the Centre Court and if they were there only for a brief "surprise" period, i.e. either you were lucky enough to walk past or you missed out completely. Simply terrible.

In summary we would object to the Masterplan in its entirety.

The Council's ambition is adverse to what its residents want. We would also say it's disappointing (but perhaps not surprising) that the Council has not been able to come up with a thoughtful and workable solution for the next generation of Wimbledonians. It's another missed opportunity to rejuvenate the town centre and create a unique area, venues and infrastructure of its own, able to forming a magnet for young families, professionals and businesses alike.

What a shame and it seems that - yet again - no lessons have been learned!

We truly hope that the proposed Master-/Local Plan will be abolished and a proper and official consultation process initiated and carried out to research and address this hugely important matter.

Yours Sincerely,
A [redacted] and H [redacted] England

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