

**MERTON COUNCIL**  
FUTURE MERTON

# **FUTURE WIMBLEDON SPD CONSULTATION REPORT**

SEPTEMBER 2020

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[merton.gov.uk/futurewimbledon](https://merton.gov.uk/futurewimbledon)



## FOREWORD

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We'd like to thank everyone who has taken the time to be a part of the Future Wimbledon project. In early 2017 we launched consultation on the future of Wimbledon town centre with workshops in Wimbledon Library. Over three events we gathered feedback from 222 participants, which we used to develop the draft Future Wimbledon Masterplan that was consulted on from October 2018 to January 2019. 760 responses were received in the 2018-19 consultation which informed the January 2020 draft Future Wimbledon Supplementary Planning Document (SPD).

This report explains the consultation process and shares the findings from the January to March 2020 round of consultation Future Wimbledon SPD.

Future Merton have used the feedback from over 1,300 response received since the start of the project to help inform changes to the final Future Wimbledon SPD to be adopted by the Council in November 2020.

*"I just want to say thank you to all the team involved with Future Wimbledon. It seems you have all worked very hard on this and produced an overall engaging and clear lay out of the Wimbledon you have in mind. I'm excited to see the vision come into reality over the next few decades." (Wimbledon resident)*

*"Great job. It's been a long time coming but it makes me feel proud to be part of a town with a strong vision for the future." (Wimbledon resident)*

*"A very thorough and interesting document. Applaud your vision for more open public spaces and greenery by adding more trees and retaining the beautiful older buildings of character and historical interest to maintain the character and charm of our town. However extremely worried about your intention to allow new buildings to be erected to such huge height." (Wimbledon resident)*

*"Wimbledon can quite clearly be improved by a better retail offer, better traffic management and, when new buildings have to be built, high quality, well-designed buildings that will complement existing ones. But please can you explain the need for such high buildings that are being proposed for Wimbledon (14 storeys). Can you show what evidence there is for so much more office space in Wimbledon? How can you plan for the future before you know what is happening with Crossrail?" (Wimbledon resident)*

*"We welcome the Future Merton SPD, giving guidelines for the type of development that is envisaged for the town centre is helpful for our future planning. The redevelopment of Wimbledon station and the associated retail area would be a welcome benefit to both the business and the local community.*

*We would particularly welcome an increase in pedestrianised and landscaped areas to enhance the local environment. We like the idea of buildings with active street frontages and think the taller buildings are well positioned in the central area and over the railway tracks.*

*Overall the general thrust and principles outlined in the Future Wimbledon SPD has our support and we look forward to it being finalised and adopted by Merton Council, so that it can be used to guide future development of Wimbledon Town Centre." (Wimbledon business and landowner)*

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# 1 INTRODUCTION

1.1. Since the close of the Future Wimbledon Consultation on 6th March 2020 the Covid-19 pandemic has accelerated town centre change. In particular the shift to online shopping, dining delivery options and sustainable travel (walking and cycling).

1.2. The focus of the recovery led by central government is “Building back better”, the priorities of which include:

- Creating mixed use, sustainable communities
- Capturing active travel opportunities
- Revitalising town centre by creating flexible town centre buildings and making the most of outdoor space opportunities
- Improving air quality and soundscapes for better health and wellbeing

1.3. Research from Savills found that the majority of landlords have been considering re-purposing the high street, but Covid-19 has accelerated the change. The uses being considered and delivered include the intensification and increases in food and beverage, leisure, residential, community and business space.

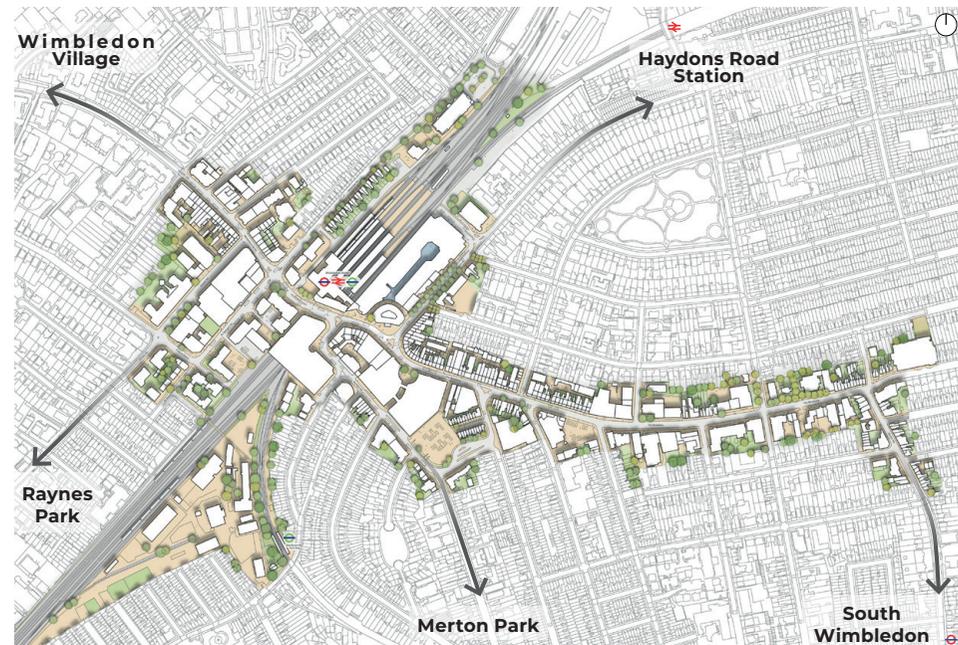
1.4. Town centres can provide accessible services and connected business hubs that minimise the need for travel.

1.5. The vision and priorities of the Future Wimbledon SPD aligned with the “Build back better” proposals being suggested. There was a greater focus on the experience of town centre by creating a mixed use neighbourhood for retail, office, community, culture and leisure.

1.6. The comments received during the January-March 2020 consultation have been considered and changes suggested by respondents have been considered. Any

changes are required to be in conformity with national and regional planning legislation, policies and guidance. As required by the NPPF, this document sets out who was consulted, how they were consulted, a summary of the main issues raised in the comments and our response to the comments.

1.7. This statement will be published on our website alongside the consultation documents in question and all responses received with all personal details removed.



Wimbledon town centre  
extent of the masterplan area

## 2 CONSULTATION

### HOW WE CONSULTED

2.1. The council is required in accordance with planning legislation to hold a public 6 week consultation. Engagement on the draft Future Wimbledon SPD started on 24th January 2020 until 6th March 2020.

2.2. Formal written consultation letters and emails were sent to local residents, businesses, residential groups and organisations, environmental stakeholders (e.g. Environment Agency) and other interested parties.

2.3. An email was also sent to circa 600 residents on Merton's Local Plan consultation database and to all individuals who opted in to receive updates on the Future Wimbledon project following the 2018-19 consultation.

2.4. Future Merton attended the Wimbledon Community Forum on 29th January, Stephen Hammond MP's meeting with residents on 8th February and the Wimbledon Landowner Forum, including local businesses on 26th February 2020.

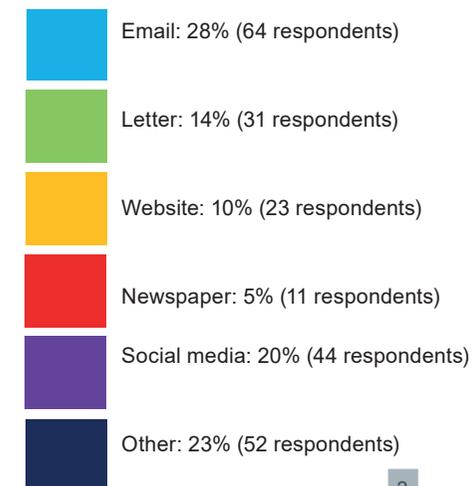
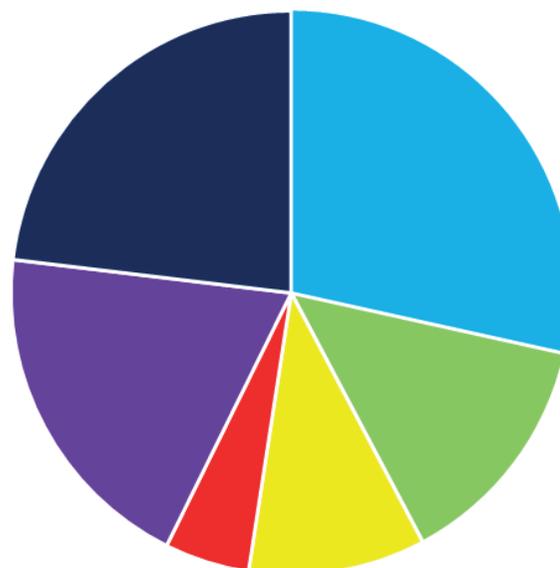
2.5. The consultation was also publicised via social media on the council's Facebook and Twitter accounts.

2.6. Those respondents who responded to the consultation via Survey Monkey told us that they heard about the draft masterplan by email, post, website, social media and "other", which included correspondence from local

residents' groups, word of mouth, Wimbledon Magazine, meetings where the council was presenting and Nextdoor. This is summarised in Figure 3.

2.7. Overall, 347 responses were received to the draft Future Wimbledon SPD consultation. More responses were received via the SurveyMonkey form (214) as opposed to letter or email (133). The questionnaire on Survey Monkey asked for the participant's views on the sections of the SPD and some demographic characteristics.

2.8. Responses that were received by email and post did not contain demographic data, however if it was stated that the respondent lived, worked or visited the borough then this was picked up in the analysis. A summary of the demography of respondents to the masterplan is provided in the next few pages.



How Survey Monkey respondents heard about the consultation where information was given

### 3 KEY STATISTICS

#### WHO RESPONDED

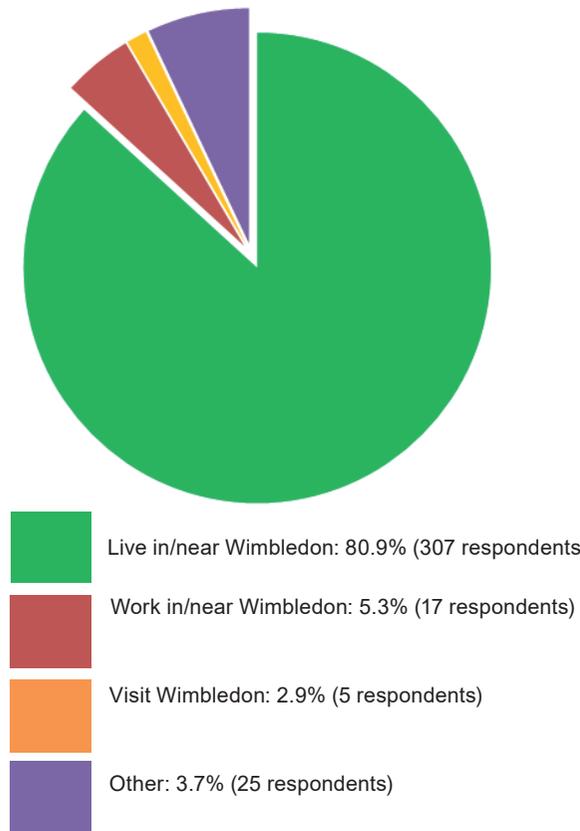
2.9. Figure 4 shows the relationship of respondents to Wimbledon town centre. The 25 respondents that answered “other” included landowners, businesses, residential/community groups and statutory consultees (for example Historic England, Greater London Authority Sport England and Metropolitan Police)

2.10. 200 respondents answered the question on gender identity, of these, 83 were male (42%), 101 were female (51%), 3 were “other” (2%) and 13 (7%) said they preferred not to say

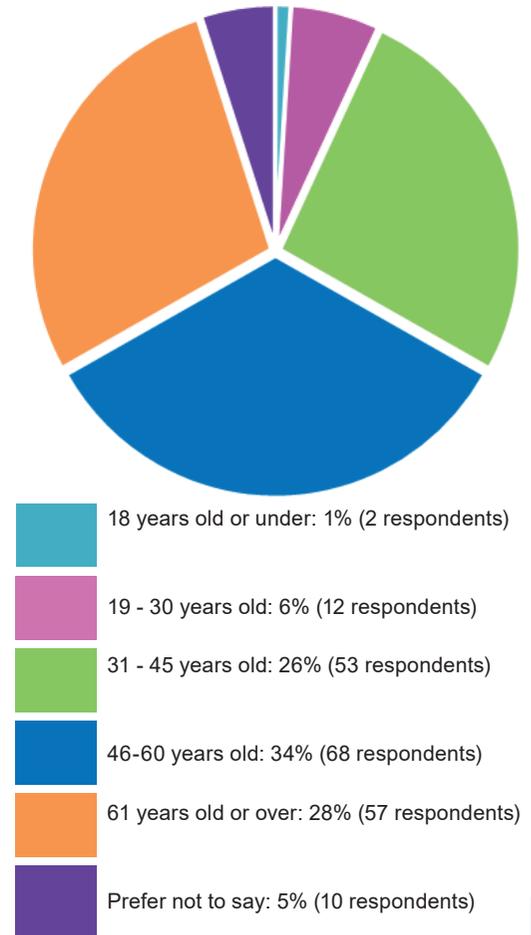
2.11. Of those who responded to the consultation 96% (192 respondents) reported no disability, and 4% (7 respondents) considered themselves to have a disability.

2.12. In the Survey Monkey questionnaire 202 respondents answered the question on age profile, of these: This data is shown in Figure 5.

2.13. Respondents to the Survey Monkey questionnaire were asked to provide details of their ethnicity. 176 respondents provided an answer to this question. The majority, 89% of respondents identified themselves as White-English/Welsh/Scottish/Northern Irish/British. The remaining responses were split between White-Irish (3%), Asian or Asian British (2%), Indian (1%), Pakistani (1%), Bangladeshi (1%), Chinese (1%), and Mixed/multiple ethnic groups: White and Black African (1%).



The proportion of respondents who live, work, and visit Wimbledon town centre



The age profile of Survey Monkey respondents

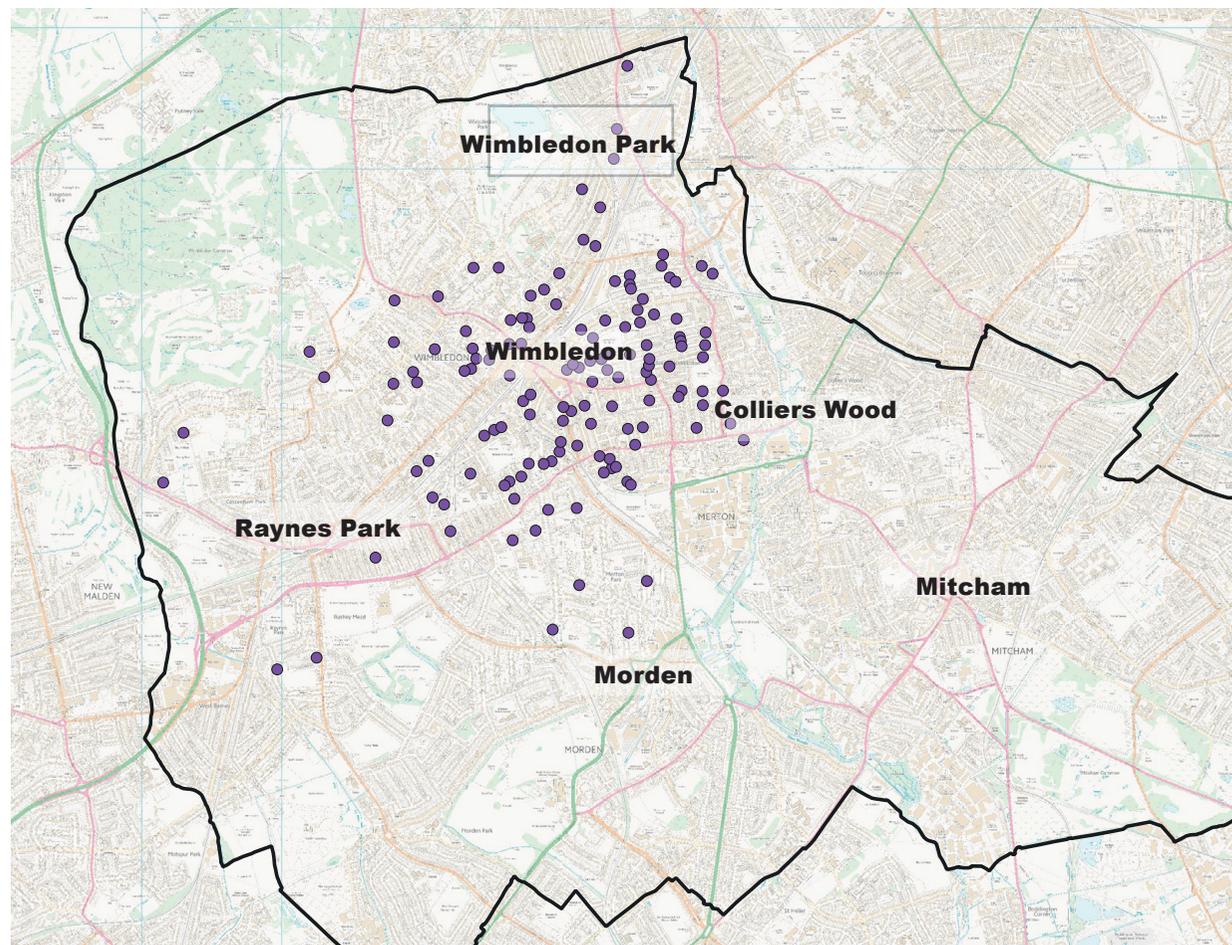
## WHO RESPONDED

2.14. The map in Figure 6 shows the location of respondents to the draft Future Wimbledon SPD consultation. It shows all individual postcodes provided by respondents, where the full postcode was given. There were responses from 171 unique postcodes.

2.15. The data shows that the vast majority of respondents lived in or near Wimbledon. The postcode analysis shows that responses were received from households in Abbey, Trinity, Dundonald, Hillside, Wimbledon Park, Merton Park and Village wards, which are all closely connected to Wimbledon town centre.

2.16. The following groups provided a response to the consultation:

- Battles Area Residents' Association
- Friends of Wimbledon Town Centre
- John Innes Society
- Queen's Road Residents' Group
- Wimbledon Society
- Merton Cycling Campaign
- Love Wimbledon



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OS MasterMap Imagery Layer has been created using OS's own imagery and imagery from other suppliers.



## Quotes

4.6. *“With the up and coming Crossrail and tram extension, Wimbledon will be even more used as a major centre. Opportunities for a major transport hub (multi-modal) will have to be met and the pairing demand for offices/homes/retail and/or restaurants. A great meeting point for people, less intense than Clapham which is a near neighbour. Closer to London and more connections than places like Kingston” (Wimbledon resident aged 19-30 years)*

4.7. *“It is clearly written and explains that this is a framework for future development. But I feel the heavy emphasis on business development and facilities for visitors means the needs of local residents for a pleasant place to shop in , walk through and live in have been somewhat neglected.” (Wimbledon resident aged 61+ years)*

4.8. *“I think you should have said that Wimbledon town centre is a result of a lack of planning and that now The council are attempting to be more strategic and to try to create a plan to control and encourage future development” (Wimbledon resident aged 61+ years)*

4.9. *“Useful to see how the plan fits in with current policy. A great focus on design. What about the climate emergency?” (Wimbledon resident aged 18 or under)*

4.10. *“We should not be encouraging the provision of MAJOR office development above the shopping centre. This is looking as if it will lead to high rise and Croydon esque buildings. Not what Wimbledon needs. I am not sure that Wimbledon needs its own conference venues, nor significantly more hotels” (Wimbledon resident aged 46-60 years)*

4.11. *“The plan states that “growth and development is inevitable”, but contains no economic rationale or analysis to justify this assumed growth. In reality, there is little evidence of demand for more office space in Wimbledon, with much current space actually vacant. The whole emphasis of the plan is on Wimbledon as a commercial centre; residents’ interests are barely mentioned.” (Wimbledon resident aged 61+ years)*

4.12. *“We strongly agree that the Council seeks to provide developers with further clarity and guidance on future growth within Wimbledon Town Centre. In order to enable the area surrounding Wimbledon station to become a major destination, it is essential that growth is encouraged and facilitated to make sites in this area viable, adaptable and attractive to the business market so that they are encouraged to come forward. We strongly agree that in addition to offices, other commercial uses as well as housing will be necessary, and so the planning guidance of this document should be flexibly drawn to encourage sites to come forward for redevelopment.” (Wimbledon landowner)*

## Response to the comments

4.13. The introduction section of the SPD is largely factual. It outlines the purpose and status of the plan, the relevant policies and policy documents.

4.14. The concerns regarding pressure on local infrastructure are not something that is addressed through an SPD. As part of the Local Plan process there is a borough-wide Infrastructure Needs Assessment which determines what investment is required as a result of population growth and development.

4.15. The dependence of the SPD vision on Crossrail 2 was mentioned in the 2018-19 consultation. In the 2020 version the document divided the developments into three phases to illustrate the change in the short, medium and long (with Crossrail 2) vision.

## Suggested changes

4.16. Following careful consideration of the comments on the Introduction, these changes have been made to the SPD:

- Add a statement on the council’s declaration of a Climate Emergency and the commitment to tackle climate change.
- Refer to the extensive consultation process that has shaped the SPD.



5.6. *“Very informative though there is no indication as to the good examples of design and build over the years. No reflection on the piecemeal approach to development and how that has shaped Wimbledon town.” (Wimbledon resident aged 46-60 years)*

5.7. *“Clear recognition that the historic rich heritage and green spaces in what represents the charm of Wimbledon.” (Wimbledon resident)*

5.8. *“The historic context is really important for local homeowners and the heritage needs to be retained. We clearly need to develop into the future and update but not to lose the lovely historic buildings that are already here.” (Wimbledon resident aged 46-60 years)*

5.9. *“I never realised how unhistoric modern day Wimbledon really is!” (Wimbledon resident aged 19-30 years)*

5.10. *“We very much support the improved focus on Wimbledon’s heritage; this will strengthen the SPD and help create locally distinct, high quality spaces. The SPD represents heritage well throughout and not simply as a standalone feature. Recognising the multifaceted role heritage can play in delivering social, economic, and environmental progress is a key strand of the NPPF and we are pleased to see this set out in the SPD.” (Historic England)*

## Response to the comments

5.11. It is clear that Wimbledon town centre’s historic buildings are of great importance to local residents. The Future Wimbledon SPD recognises their value and the section on Design Quality details how Wimbledon’s heritage should be respected by future development.

5.12. Concern around the protection of heritage assets was a strong part of the feedback to the 2018-19 consultation. In response the 2020 version of the SPD went into more detail on the location and protection of Wimbledon’s heritage assets. Listed and Locally Listed buildings are protected by national and local planning policy. The Future Wimbledon SPD goes further to identify other period buildings that contribute positively to the character of Wimbledon, for example Victorian terraces on The Broadway.

5.13. In their representation, Historic England, supported the improved focus on Wimbledon’s heritage throughout the document. Historic England are consulted on any developments that come forward in the vicinity of heritage buildings as part of the planning process.

## Suggested changes

5.14. Following careful consideration of the comments on the History of Wimbledon section these changes have been made to the SPD:

- Include a narrative on the good examples of design and build over the years and how the piecemeal approach has shaped Wimbledon town.

## 6 FEEDBACK: WIMBLEDON TODAY

### Analysis

6.1. There were 193 responses received regarding the section on Wimbledon Today and 71 comments. 41% agreed and 31% neither agreed or disagreed, leaving 28% disagreeing with the content (Figure 11).

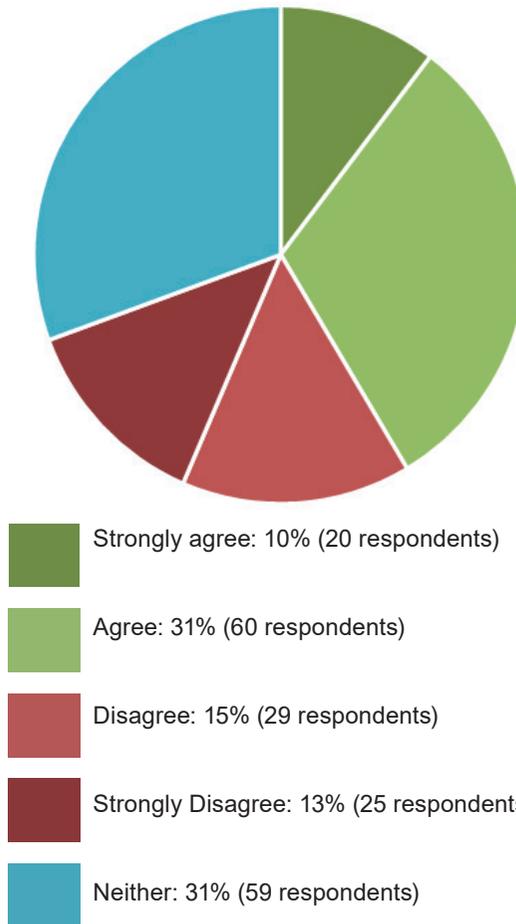
6.2. It was largely agreed that this section of the SPD is factual, and the majority of the comments were about increasing emphasis on the value of independent retailers, the Climate Emergency, greater provision for culture and entertainment and the future of retail.

6.3. Those who disagreed with this section said that Wimbledon was predominantly a residential area and there should be less focus on commercial growth, particularly offices, in the town centre.

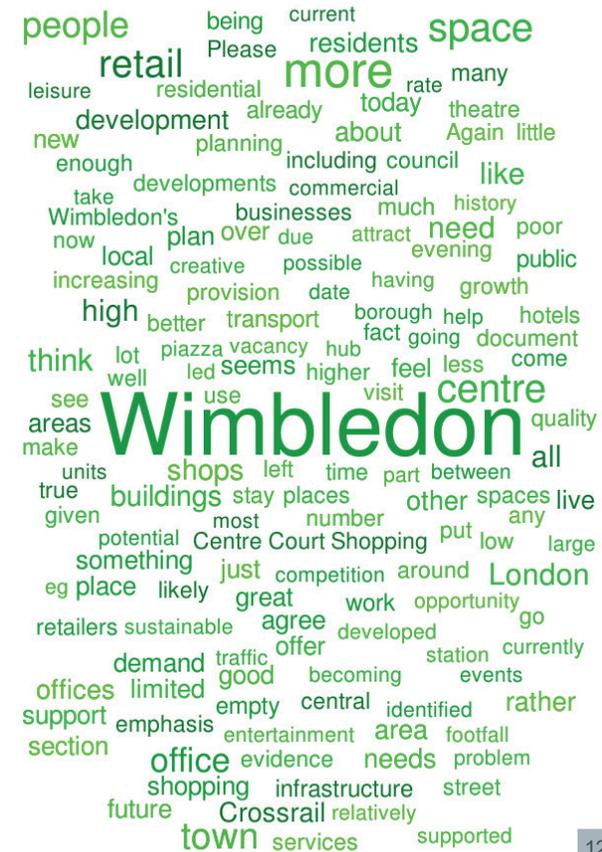
6.4. The word cloud in Figure 12 provides a summary of the 150 most used words in all of the responses relating to the Wimbledon today section.

### Quotes

6.5. *“I can see the attraction of businesses relocating out of central London to Wimbledon. But I think to maintain the identity of Wimbledon being a town where people live the number, design and height needs to be carefully managed and controlled.” (Wimbledon resident aged 46-60 years)*



Responses to the Wimbledon Today section of the Future Wimbledon SPD



Depiction of the most frequent words used in response to Wimbledon today

6.6. *“Wimbledon today is a busy suburb of London and already there is much traffic of vehicles and people. It would be great to have more bicycle paths and pedestrian areas and fewer roads and cars, trucks and heavy vehicles.” (Wimbledon resident aged 46-60 years)*

6.7. *“You need to ensure that Wimbledon becomes sustainable and with a new urban plan you have the opportunity to make Wimbledon carbon neutral” (Wimbledon resident aged 46-60 years)*

6.8. *“Wimbledon today is a good town centre with a potentially strong brand. But it is rather ‘chain’ led and much of the shopping offer could be found anywhere. This isn’t really the councils job to manage, landowners need to be more creative and flexible to keep the town centre dynamic and enjoyable.” (Wimbledon resident aged 19-30 years)*

6.9. *“Wimbledon has always been seen as one of the more pleasant areas of London with quite a lot of green space, some historic buildings and older quality residential areas, enough shops, offices providing employment, attractions for day and night including the world famous tennis and transport links to enable residents and outsiders to come and enjoy it all.” (Wimbledon resident)*

6.10. *“We strongly agree that there is a demand for new office space within*

*Wimbledon Town Centre. Planning policy should be drafted to encourage new office floorspace to come forward.” (Wimbledon landowner)*

### **Response to the comments**

6.11. The fact that the SPD has a commercial focus was a common response received in the 2018-19 consultation. It was clarified that this was because the SPD boundary covers the town centre, and is intended to guide development proposals on sites within the town centre. We recognise that Wimbledon is an attractive residential area, and that this should be maintained in the future.

6.12. Many respondents agreed with the vision to improve the town centre offer. The section of the SPD on The future of the high street outlines in detail the vision for retail, office, culture and entertainment in Wimbledon town centre.

### **Suggested changes**

6.13. Following careful consideration of the comments on the section Wimbledon today, these changes have been made to the SPD:

- Include an ambition to engage a younger audience in art fairs and events, like the Wimbledon Piazza markets, as somewhere to support and promote local artists.

- Update the statistics on office occupancy and shop vacancies in the town centre.
- More narrative on the future of retail. This will also need to include a COVID update.
- More mention of independent businesses in the town centre.
- Description of what factors will attract businesses and what competitive advantages Wimbledon has relative to other outer London locations.
- Recognition that the town centre needs to be more creative and flexible to be dynamic and enjoyable.
- More about the preparedness for climate change and the shift to being carbon-neutral by 2050.



*buildings. I don't think it's an issue. Done right taller buildings can be woven into the town and create more spaces for businesses and residents to keep the town thriving." (Wimbledon resident aged 19-30 years)*

7.5. *"Agree building heights and design, help for independent shops and public green spaces all need to be a priority." (Wimbledon resident aged 31-45 years)*

7.6. *"I agree that you consulted residents and that you have accurately described that process. However, I am not sure you have listened to the comments. The tall building on Hartfield Road is an example. Residents made clear they did not want high rise in Wimbledon." (Wimbledon resident aged 46-60 years)*

7.7. *"It is also evident that extensive community engagement has been undertaken to inform the draft SPD, which [...] provides a sound basis to determine future planning applications within the Town Centre, providing added confidence for stakeholders, including our Client, seeking to deliver the aims of the SPD." (Wimbledon landowner)*

7.8. *"It would be very much better if you actually took notice of residents' suggestions. The YMCA has done well here, and its latest proposals are a massive improvement which will enable local people to interact with the space." (Wimbledon resident aged 61+ years)*

7.9. *"We are pleased to see that the Final Consultation Draft has been amended to address comments received on the previous draft, in particular: An indication of how development will phased in the period up to 2040; The inclusion of a more detailed section relating to delivery and implementation. We are also pleased to see that the Masterplan is now referred to as a 'Vision' which we consider to be more appropriate and that some further guidance on heritage and design has been provided." (Residents Association)*

#### **Response to the comments**

7.10. Since the launch of Future Wimbledon in 2017 the consultation process has accorded with the guidance in the NPPF. Approximately 2,000 responses have been considered during this period. In response to feedback the January 2020 version of SPD was altered to:

- Include more detail on design quality and protection of heritage assets
- Divided the document into three phases to illustrate the gradual development of the town until 2040+
- Reduced the proposed building heights and massing, increasing spaces between buildings for public realm improvements
- A greater emphasis on greening and sustainability in the context of Merton

declaring a Climate Emergency

- Adding a section on delivery to stipulate how the aspirations of the SPD can be delivered through specific work streams and projects.

7.11. The majority of concerns highlighted in comments on the engagement section relate to other parts of the SPD, namely building height, sustainability and the future of the high street. These comments have been addressed in the relevant parts of this consultation report.

#### **Suggested changes**

7.12. Following careful consideration of the comments on the engagement section these changes have been made to the SPD:

- Updating the Delivery section of the plan to highlight the methods for continued engagement of local residents groups. As development proposals emerge it will be the responsibility of applicants to engage with residents early on in the design process. A good example of this is the YMCA proposals on The Broadway, of which many residents are complimentary.
- The council will consult on proposals for public realm improvements, giving stakeholders an opportunity to shape the designs.



## Quotes

8.6. *“I Like the priorities set out and the phasing of development images. The images of future Wimbledon are great to give life to the vision. I really like the way this section is presented and the different maps to show different aspects the priorities are focused on.” (Wimbledon resident aged 19-30 years)*

8.7. *“Good to see lots on green space and places for people. Good that building heights have been reduced.” (Wimbledon resident aged 46-60 years)*

8.8. *“All looks ok except for the building heights. Wimbledon does not need 14 story buildings, and it will ruin the heritage and character of the town centre. A maximum of 6 or 8 stories seems more suitable, and then scaled down similar to the existing plan. Quality design must also be emphasised.” (Wimbledon resident aged 31-45 years)*

8.9. *“While I am pleased at the plan’s emphasis on high quality design and building materials, there is very little detail overall and by taking a site by site approach to development, it could open the door to massive and piecemeal over-development of the town centre.” (Wimbledon resident)*

8.10. *“Concerned that the proposed building heights are too high for the town centre. I accept that there is limited lateral space so*

*growing vertically seems to be the option. However, after Crossrail 2, could we not build mid height buildings over the railway line? This would reduce train noise locally.” (Wimbledon resident aged 46-60 years)*

8.11. *“Please refer to my comments above. Whilst I agree with some of the objectives I disagree with the imposition of tall buildings and would query their necessity.” (Wimbledon resident aged 61+ years)*

8.12. *“The draft SPD offers the opportunity to create and implement a more structured plan for the town centre, focused around the station area, and seeks to address some of the long-standing issues of development, renewal and transport, whilst linking investment in public spaces to support the growth of the town centre.” (Wimbledon landowner)*

8.13. *“Significant, detailed, work that has been undertaken in the evolution of the document to-date and both commends and supports the overall principle of the vision shown by the Council and the aspiration to deliver a vibrant, and importantly viable, town centre, that can compete within the wider region.” (Wimbledon landowner)*

## Response to the comments

8.14. The responses received in this section were largely positive in relation to all aspects of the vision, with the exception of building

heights. This has been the case throughout the Future Wimbledon process and following the 2018-19 consultation overall building heights in the document were lowered.

## Suggested changes

8.15. Following careful consideration of the comments on the Future Wimbledon section these changes have been made to the SPD:

- A greater emphasis throughout the document on the measures required in response to the council’s declaration of a Climate Emergency.
- A review of the balance between emphasis on commercial and residential development within the town centre. This includes the acknowledgement of the potential for residential development on upper floors of new commercial premises to create more flexibility and resilience within the town centre.
- Removal of the scenario once Crossrail 2 has been delivered. This includes the development proposed over the railway tracks, which included the tallest buildings.

## 9 FEEDBACK: DESIGN QUALITY

### Analysis

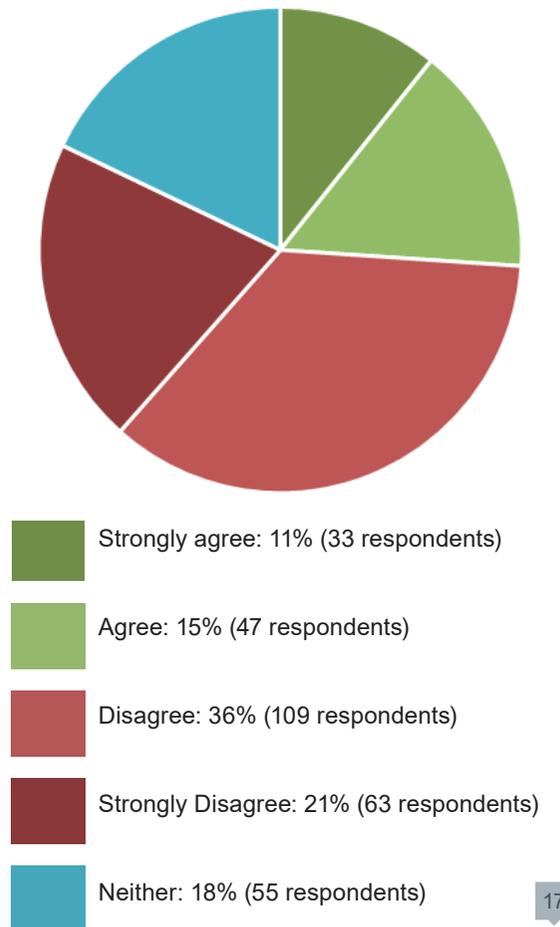
9.1. The section of the SPD on Engagement received 307 responses with 224 comments. The majority (56%) disagreed with the Future Wimbledon vision, 26% agreed and 18% neither agreed or disagreed (Figure 17).

9.2. The majority of comments received made specific reference to proposed building heights. Similarly to the 2018-19 consultation local residents do not support taller buildings in Wimbledon town centre. The most common proposed maximum building height amongst residents ranged from 6 to 10 storeys.

9.3. There was still concern that the SPD provided insufficient protection for Wimbledon’s heritage assets. However, the SPD is guidance and any development proposals must be in accordance with local, regional and national planning policies, which provide protection for listed and locally listed buildings.

9.4. The greater detail on design quality was well received, as well as the greater emphasis on protecting Wimbledon’s heritage. This section also looks to encourage developments that respect and enhance the existing character of Wimbledon town centre.

9.5. The word cloud in Figure 18 provides a summary of the 150 most used words in the responses relating to the Design quality section.



Responses to the Design quality section of the Future Wimbledon SPD



Depiction of the most frequent words used in response to Design quality

## Quotes

9.6. *“Agree completely with the ambition of high quality buildings with Wimbledon’s character in mind when choosing materials and structure. Key to making the town cohesive. The urban design section is very informative and interesting. Scale and massing will be very important in Wimbledon to successfully merge with the surrounding low residential areas. Trust the council to conduct building heights in an appropriate manner and successfully increase the height towards the centre. Public interface is key with new developments.” (Wimbledon resident aged 19-30)*

9.7. *“Greater restriction on height of buildings You are in danger of creating “canyons” of high rise office blocks” (Wimbledon resident aged 61+ years)*

9.8. *“Lots of good things in here about scale, micro-climates, people friendly etc. Didn’t see anything about use of sustainable materials for construction, nor about an assumption that all new buildings should be substantially or wholly powered by sustainable means e.g. solar panels on roofs. I think these are vital e.g. so we don’t keep heating our local climate with things like air conditioning units.” (Wimbledon resident aged 46-60 years)*

9.9. *“We agree that tall buildings and high-density redevelopment should be*

*encouraged in the town centre. We agree with the guidance on building heights and the Council’s emphasis on the importance of high quality design that minimises the impact on the surrounding context. We agree that the guidance on building heights should not be “over-prescriptive”. However, it should be clearly established whether this is a minimum or maximum parameter to ensure clarity and consistency of policy outcomes. To ensure that Wimbledon Town Centre remains future-proof, we suggest that criteria setting out the circumstances in which new developments can exceed the tolerances identified in the SPD, be defined and clearly set out.” (Wimbledon landowner)*

9.10. *“Agree except for the section on building heights. Too much density and height. I think it would cast a shadow over the remainder of Wimbledon and devalue the aesthetics of the community/greening/leisure areas.” (Wimbledon resident aged 46-60 years)*

9.11. *“See above - sympathetic design is extremely important given the mix of beautiful buildings in the town centre and the need for any new buildings to fit in.” (Wimbledon resident aged 31-45 years)*

9.12. *“I am strongly opposed to any development of Wimbledon town centre which leads to any increase in the height of buildings in Wimbledon. No building should be allowed*

*to be any taller than it is at the moment. Any building replacing an existing building should be no taller than the building that was on that site.” (Wimbledon resident aged 31-45 years)*

9.13. *“The proposal to allow buildings up to 14 storeys in height is completely unacceptable and would permit development contrary to Wimbledon’s whole heritage and character. Even in the St George’s Road area such tall buildings would be oppressive and would tower over neighbouring residential streets. This idea negates all the positive points in this section regarding high quality design and materials.” (Wimbledon resident aged 61+ years)*

9.14. *“Good quality architecture is very important Buildings should be built to last 50 years plus” (Wimbledon resident aged 46-60 years)*

9.15. *“I understand that London has to grow and I can see that the plan is not trying to copy Canary Wharf or Croydon, 14 stories is a leap for Wimbledon but is realistic as it is a main town centre and Morden and Collier’s wood already have taller buildings.” (Wimbledon resident aged 19-30 years)*

9.16. *“Design review panels should become a staple of Wimbledon planning decisions, even for smaller developments. It’s truly the easiest way to ensure quality.” (Wimbledon resident aged 31-45 years)*

9.17. *“The guidance is overly rigid in designating blanket height limits across the proposed neighbourhoods. If this is meant to be a guide, then the Masterplan should explicitly stage degrees of flexibility and how these will be assessed, for instance and in addition to our comments regarding storey versus AOD height, market demand and viability considerations. The Masterplan should also recognise the difficulties of site assembly for some sites, given their restrictive nature and the requirement to provide a mixture of uses, especially at lower levels, plant and other servicing requirements.”*  
(Wimbledon landowner)

### Response to the comments

9.18. Similar to the 2018-19 consultation there still remains concerns amongst respondents about building heights in Wimbledon town centre and the impact on heritage assets. However, Historic England in their response welcomed the reduction in maximum building height from 18 storeys to 14 storeys and the improved focus on Wimbledon’s heritage throughout the document, and not simply as a standalone feature.

9.19. The focus of the objections to the Future Wimbledon SPD regarding new development and building height was on buildings higher than 8 storeys. The majority of buildings shown in the height guidance

are fewer than 8 storeys, with the exception of those adjacent to the railway tracks and along St George’s Road, which it was agreed was the least sensitive area for residents and heritage assets.

9.20. Historic England have sought further clarification in the SPD by providing building heights in metres and specifying how double height ground floors should be assessed.

9.21. Landowners responded positively to the design and quality section of the plan. Their main concern was that the building height guidance could be interpreted as overly-prescriptive and that more emphasis was needed on the role of viability and the merits of individual applications.

9.22. Residents were concerned about the negative effects of tall buildings on the pedestrian environment and their sustainability in the context of climate change and reducing carbon. These are all issues that are addressed in the SPD and are supported by local, regional and national planning policy.

### Suggested changes

9.23. Following careful consideration of the comments on the Design quality section these changes have been made to the SPD:

- Building height guidance expressed in metres, based on the existing height of surrounding buildings and an assumption

on standard floor to ceiling heights in commercial and residential buildings.

- Review of the wording to ensure that it is not overly-prescriptive, takes into account factors including viability, and adheres to regional and national policy. More emphasis that building height specified in the SPD should not be considered mandatory and that schemes will be assessed on an individual site by site basis.



## Quotes

10.7. *“There is a welcome emphasis on creating new pedestrian links and spaces, and improving footway design. A pedestrian arcade leading off the present Piazza is proposed, but it could be a public asset if fully covered and glazed, as in the Hays Wharf galleria.” (Wimbledon Society)*

10.8. *“We need more youthful and greener streets, can we have more cycle lanes please.” (Wimbledon resident aged 18 or under)*

10.9. *“Ensure the places are well lit, green, spacious enough, can involve communities in their upkeep and usage. As council encouraging walking ensure pavements wide enough especially by bus stops e.g. theatre. High quality, natural street furniture, links to Wimbledon heritage, active frontages to draw people in to businesses.” (Wimbledon resident aged 46-60 years)*

10.10. *“Wimbledon needs more central open spaces and greenery. Pavements are very cluttered and difficult to navigate. Segregated cycle lanes are a very good idea; mixing with pedestrians is dangerous (most pedestrians do not pay attention to where they are walking) and many drivers are aggressive towards cyclists. Crossings over the railway line e.g. Alexandra Road to Queens Road would be a good idea (this could be pedestrian just to ease congestion in the main part of the*

*station)” (Wimbledon resident)*

10.11. *“Suggestions for improving pedestrian links and spaces are welcome, as is the proposal to move the emphasis from vehicles. This will make access on foot pleasanter and may help address Climate Emergency.” (Wimbledon resident aged 61+ years)*

10.12. *“I note that the SPD states that the public realm will be designed to prioritise pedestrians and improve facilities for cyclists – this is welcomed. I also note reference to the Healthy Streets Approach and its associated quality of life benefits.” (Sport England)*

10.13. *“Motor traffic volumes are currently damaging to the public realm, and the amount of space dedicated to traffic and parking makes it very difficult to make meaningful improvements. There needs to be a shift away from motor traffic and towards active travel. Roadspace should be reallocated to form new public spaces and to enable safe cycle infrastructure.” (Merton Cycling Campaign)*

## Response to the comments

10.14. The majority of responses relating to the public realm were in agreement with the proposals outlined in the SPD. Similarly to the 2018-19 consultation residents are still concerned about the traffic in Wimbledon town centre. Whilst there is enthusiasm for an additional road bridge connecting Alexandra

Road and Queen’s Road it is recognised that this comes with significant challenges.

10.15. Since the start of the Covid-19 pandemic cycling has increased across London, supported by local transport improvements to cycle infrastructure. The council has submitted funding bids to improve cycling in Wimbledon, as set out in the [Active and Healthy Travel response to Covid](#) adopted by Cabinet 15th June 2020.

## Suggested changes

10.16. Following careful consideration of the comments on the Public realm section these changes have been made to the SPD:

- More about facilitating community/arts/ small and individual retail and markets around the town centre.
- Add to the delivery section that clear guidance is required at the pre-application stage to assist applicants in achieving the ambitions for the public realm and avoid conflict between street trees, street furniture, pedestrian flows and servicing.
- Greater mention of the Climate Emergency as a common theme.
- More detail on proposed cycle infrastructure improvements and their delivery.

# 11 URBAN GREENING AND SUSTAINABILITY

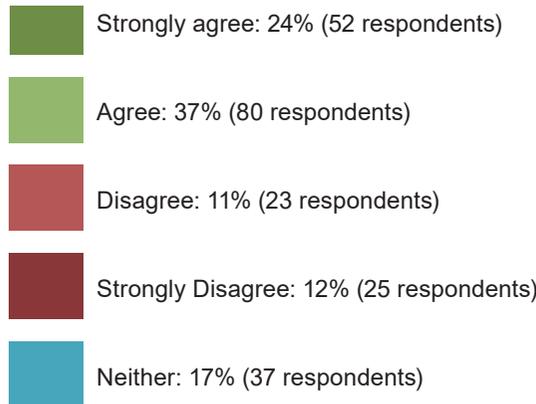
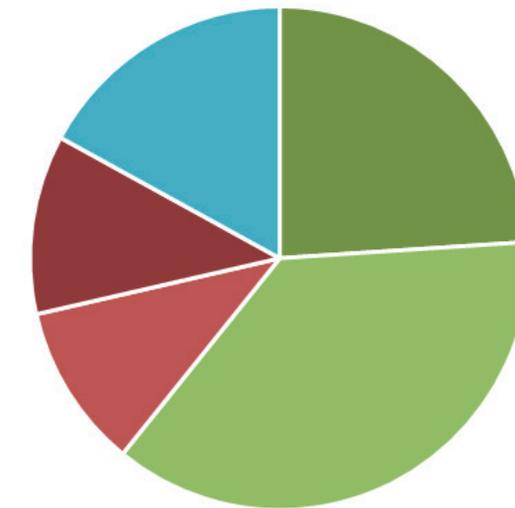
## Analysis

11.1. There were 217 responses to the section on Urban greening and sustainability, and 119 comments. Of these 61% agreed with the priorities, 23% disagreed and 17% neither agreed or disagreed (Figure 21).

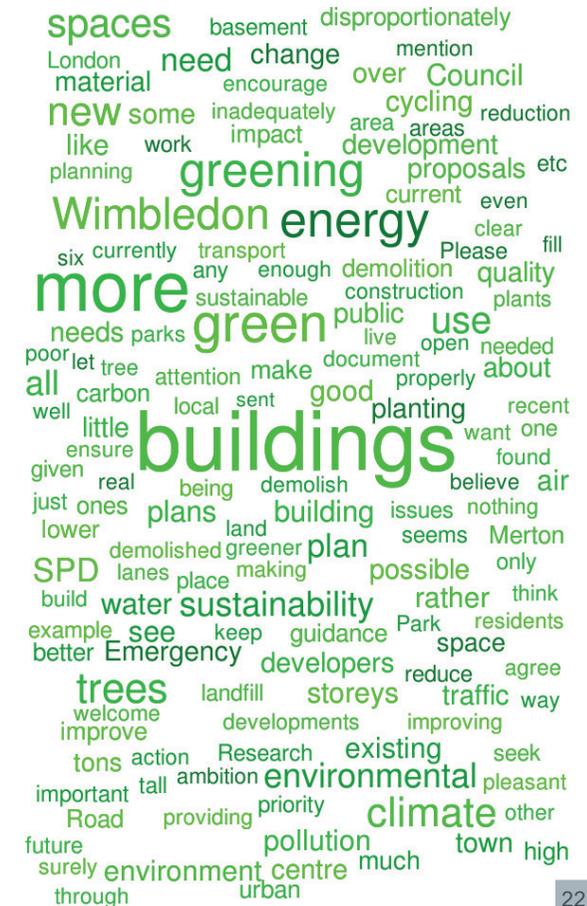
11.2. The proposals to encourage low carbon design, improve air quality and flood water management were well received. Although some respondents sought greater emphasis on the environmental benefits of extending and refurbishing buildings and avoiding demolition. This made up a large proportion of those who “disagreed” in their response.

11.3. The delivery of the ambitions within this section was questioned by respondents, who wanted stronger requirements for applicants. Some of those who disagreed did not believe that the proposals went far enough, and sought to increase the amount of open and green space in the town centre.

11.4. The word cloud in Figure 22 provides a summary of the 150 most used words in all of the responses relating to the Urban greening and sustainability section.



Responses to the Urban greening and sustainability section of the Future Wimbledon SPD



Depiction of the most frequent words used in response to Urban greening and sustainability

## Quotes

11.5. *“Very good, as far as it goes, but it should go further to include need for biodiversity, and also the environmental impact of building works themselves - materials consumed, wasted, CO2 and air quality impact of works, and all the huge amount of transport involved. So consider more work on adapting existing buildings?”* (Wimbledon resident aged 61+ years)

11.6. *“Of the highest importance. Make sure you don’t let the developers cut corners in the environmental impact of any new buildings”* (Wimbledon resident aged 46-60 years)

11.7. *“The Plan should have strict guidance and requirements on energy and water use; recycling rain water, low energy systems, good drainage to cope with changing weather conditions etc. as a standard requirement for all new buildings.”* (Wimbledon resident)

11.8. *“Our Client welcomes that the themes of sustainability and place making that underpin the draft SPD. M&G Real Estate are committed to delivering the highest levels of sustainability through their assets and are signed members of the Better Buildings Partnership.”* (Wimbledon landowner)

11.9. *“Its not clear how this plan delivers the Council’s climate emergency objectives. Re-use of existing buildings, like Wellington*

*House, is surely more sustainable than re-building. Though, St Georges Rd has no active frontages due to the car park levels, so I can see why this is a problem.”* (Wimbledon resident)

11.10. *“I agree that urban greening should be a huge priority as well as sustainability. However I disagree with greening at the expensive of cycling lanes.”* (Wimbledon resident aged 31-45 years)

11.11. *“As much green space, trees and landscaping as can be incorporated in future development will be very beneficial for the well being of the those that live and work in Wimbledon and creating a pleasant environment”* (Works in Wimbledon, aged 46-60 years)

11.12. *“Sustainability should be more than just being green. Responding to the various initiatives with regarding being carbon neutral by 2030/2050 should feature as an aspiration. Mentioning LETI (London Energy Transformation Initiative) published in 2020 would help to reinforce the Local plan to include low carbon as a key objective in any new building.”* (Wimbledon resident aged 46-60 years)

## Response to the comments

11.13. Urban greening and sustainability are important aspirations for Wimbledon residents

who responded to the consultation. There is scope to increase the emphasis on achieving the aims associated with the council’s declaration of a Climate Emergency.

11.14. With regard to tree planting, energy efficiency and water management in new buildings developers will be required to meet the requirements of Merton’s Local Plan, the London Plan and NPPF.

11.15. In response to COVID-19 there has been more of a focus on delivery a more environmentally sustainably future through recovery. The SPD outlines a vision for supporting a sustainable future for Wimbledon town centre, which will be supported by Local Plan policies, the London Plan and national planning policy.

## Suggested changes

11.16. Following careful consideration of the comments on the Urban greening and sustainability section these changes have been made to the SPD:

- More information on the benefits of refurbishing and extending existing buildings compared to demolition with relation to embodied carbon.
- Make reference to the delivery plans for achieving greening aspirations.



*promoted and supported. However, flexibility should be retained to allow mixes of use in response to market demand and to achieve public benefits such as maintaining active frontages at ground floor level.” (Wimbledon landowner)*

*12.8. “I have not seen any hard evidence to show that businesses are looking to open offices in the town. However, I am all in favour of developing sites for local retail outlets, especially independent businesses and market stalls.” (Wimbledon resident)*

*12.9. “The supply of office space within Wimbledon is extremely limited with few vacancies available and that the majority of available space in the Town Centre is refurbished 1980s stock, with very limited Grade A availability. Being able to attract new businesses to the town centre and successfully compete against other centres in the region is considered key for the future success of the town centre. It is our Client’s assertion that delivery of new office floor space, particularly when characterised by large floor plates, and delivered to a Grade A standard, is critical in broadening the offer of the centre and attracting investment and high quality new tenants.” (Wimbledon landowner)*

*12.10. “It is considered a flexible approach to land use, particularly at lower levels of buildings, is the most appropriate away for the SPD to ensure it remains robust and relevant*

*in the future, and allows the town centre to remain competitive and react to market conditions and market trends going forward.” (Wimbledon landowner)*

*12.11. “The SPD makes a non-committal reference to a Concert Hall for Wimbledon. I would like to see a Concert Hall and greater provision of creative and performance arts activities. The SPD mentions the night-time economy and the need for balance in terms of addressing the negative impacts such as noise, disturbance and anti-social behaviour. I agree with this. There are a number of residential streets leading on to the town centre and it is important that residents are not disturbed by drunken revellers.” (Wimbledon resident aged 46-60 years)*

*12.12. “Fully support a mix use of the town centre and of mixed unit sizes to house smaller independent brands, as well as chains. In regards to the proposition of a concert venue being proposed (in the Morrisons car park?), an investment so huge would have to have serious viability considerations behind it. And honestly, with the other entertainment facilities in the area, it doesn’t seem a correct fit to me. The people suggesting this seem to be the same people not wanting the residential areas to be disrupted....which doesn’t exactly fit with a concert hall. Not to mention the possible physical ‘barrier’ it would create to the town centre.” (Wimbledon resident aged 19-30 years)*

*12.13. “With new technologies and more flexible ways of working the need for vast amounts of office space and/or shopping complexes has changed; these factors should be taken into consideration before building for the sake of building” (Wimbledon resident)*

### **Response to the comments**

12.14. Since the 2018-19 consultation the Future Wimbledon SPD removed the aspiration for Wimbledon to become a Metropolitan Centre. The January 2020 version of the plan shows reduced levels of commercial growth. Whilst there are still concerns amongst residents about the evidence for this, it is clear from landowners and Love Wimbledon BID that growing the Grade A office stock is vital in retaining existing companies and attracting new tenants to the town centre.

12.15. Since the consultation Covid-19 technological change has transformed workplaces. Amongst experts there are competing views on the future of workplaces, but it is clear that remote working is here to stay. Research by King’s College London has suggested that the trends of remote working might be accompanied by increased demand for office accommodation, including flexible workspace, in London suburbs as part of a de-centralised pattern of growth in the future.

12.16. The future of the high street is a

pertinent topic as we plan for recovery post-Covid. Encouraging flexibility of uses and making provision for independent retailers, start-ups and creative businesses will be important for Wimbledon town centre. These changes are supported by the flexible planning policies introduced by central government to support town centres.

12.17. The Covid-19 pandemic has accelerated trends affecting high streets, in particular the growth of the digital economy with online shopping, cashless transactions and home delivery dining apps.

12.18. Research has also suggested that Covid-19 may have changed people's priorities towards health, happiness and social connection over consumerism. Wimbledon town centre, along with other outer London suburbs saw a boost as more time and money was spent in local shops, whilst spending in central London was suppressed.

12.19. The SPD supports a place-based approach for improving the resilience of Wimbledon town centre. This includes creating spaces for community and connection with more markets, green spaces, places for cultural activity, and flexible retail units and workspaces.

12.20. Similarly to the 2018-19 consultation the concert hall proposal received both support and opposition from local

residents. The SPD recognises the positive contribution of culture and entertainment to the town centre. Merton Council actively supports Merton Arts Space, Bookfest, Wimbledon International Music Festival, the redevelopment of the Polka Theatre and public realm improvements in St Mark's Place and outside Wimbledon Theatre.

### **Suggested changes**

12.21. Following careful consideration of the comments on the Future of the high street section these changes have been made to the SPD:

- Review the existing land uses map to make more accurate reference to the range of uses across the town centre. The vision is for Wimbledon town centre to be flexible and mixed use and the map does not accurately reflect that ambition.
- Include a section on the future of shopping and workplaces in light of the Covid-19 pandemic, which has accelerated these trends.



## Quotes

13.6. *“Big fan of over rail development and of Crossrail 2.” (Wimbledon resident aged 31-45)*

13.7. *“Wimbledon station is too busy at rush hour, cannot wait for Crossrail 2” (Wimbledon resident aged 18 or under)*

13.8. *“Like the idea of building over the railway lines where possible to increase space. But not at the expense of buildings that are too high....” (Wimbledon resident aged 46-60 years)*

13.9. *“Good sound objectives and aspirations but more bridges that harm residential areas is a no no.” (Resident aged 61+ years)*

13.10. *“I like the idea about covering over the rails and building gardens and buildings (max 6 storeys high). It will reduce the noise from the trains and utilise the area better. Plus may ease some of the traffic in the High Street.” (Wimbledon resident aged 46-60 years)*

13.11. *““The plan to develop the station is great, but really needs Crossrail 2 through the town. I sincerely hope that it goes ahead and all the people objecting do not get listened too. Having a huge national infrastructure project and the development that will bring to the area is an opportunity that cannot be allowed to slip away because of a few “luvvies” worried*

*about some building work for a few years!” (Wimbledon resident aged 31-45 years)*

13.12. *I think we shouldn’t put any reliance on Crossrail 2 in the planning - likely not to happen for at least 30 years at best.” (Wimbledon resident)*

13.13. *“The parade of shops to the right of the station entrance should be kept - just smartened up - as should the Portland stone station entrance. These are quality buildings and part of the history of the town centre at a nice human scale. You should not be considering taking them down.” (Wimbledon resident aged 46-60 years)*

## Response to the comments

13.14. The responses received in the 2018-19 consultation included uncertainty of Crossrail 2, the effect of its construction on Wimbledon town centre and the dependence of the SPD on its delivery.

13.15. In the January 2020 edition of the SPD the vision was divided into three phases to show what the development of the town could look like independent of Crossrail 2.

13.16. The council continues to work closely with Network Rail and Crossrail 2 on options to increase capacity at Wimbledon station regardless of the timetable for Crossrail 2.

13.17. Over-railway development is an opportunity to add crossings over the railway and build new neighbourhoods over the tracks. We recognise that there are challenges associated with this type of development, particularly viability. The next version of the SPD has removed the over-track development, which included the tallest buildings proposed for the town centre.

## Suggested changes

13.18. Following careful consideration of the comments on the Station and railway section these changes have been made to the SPD:

- Review the uncertainty of Crossrail 2 and consider removing dependent developments from the overall vision.
- Keep the emphasis on increasing the capacity of the station in the short term to address overcrowding.



*practice extremely small - with the exception of the new green walkway up Wimbledon Hill to the village!" (Wimbledon resident aged 61+ years)*

14.7. *"We strongly agree that new development within Wimbledon Town Centre is dependent on the financial viability those schemes. Planning policies and strategies must be drafted carefully to ensure that this link is maintained and not broken so that schemes are prevented from coming forward when planning applications are determined." (Wimbledon landowner)*

14.8. *"I agree with looking at phases. It will need to be reviewed on a regular basis. It should be seen as a dynamic plan." (Wimbledon resident aged 46-60 years)*

14.9. *"High quality, beauty, sustainability, low rise and human centric design are paramount" (Wimbledon resident aged 46-60 years)*

14.10. *"Only development where residents have been listened to is YMCA. Community groups views to be taken more seriously in future plans. Short term Wimbledon will remain a mish mash of developments" (Wimbledon resident aged 46-60 years)*

14.11. *"Design quality is v important, developers should consider how they can put back into the community, rather than purely considering their profits when factoring in*

*quality" (Wimbledon resident aged 31-45 years)*

14.12. *"Where is the funding coming from? How quickly is it achievable? Nobody wants to live in, work in or visit a continuous building site. How much of this is realistic?" (Wimbledon resident)*

14.13. *"We would therefore wish to see a stronger reference to the importance of early and ongoing community engagement included in the SPD and for this to be identified as a key activity in the Implementation Plan" (Residents' Association)*

14.14. *"I wish people who object to this plan would realise we need the money from this development to make the town better." (Wimbledon resident aged 19-30 years)*

14.15. *"I was very impressed recently by the work that the YMCA have done on their plans to make them acceptable and even welcomed by local residents. I would urge you to apply the same principles and imagination to your dreary and uninspiring plan that is not what was asked for." (Wimbledon resident)*

#### **Response to the comments**

14.16. The responses received in the 2018-19 consultation highlighted a need for a delivery plan to accompany the SPD vision. Positive comments were received in relation to the

delivery section, but the negative comments related back to issues already mentioned including building height, commercial growth, uncertainty around Crossrail 2 and sustainability.

#### **Suggested changes**

14.17. Following careful consideration of the comments on the Delivery section these changes have been made to the SPD:

- More consideration for the Climate Emergency in all aspects of delivery.
- More emphasis on applicants engaging local residents at an early stage in the design process.
- A clear checklist for applicants on what is required at pre-app to enable the delivery of the Future Wimbledon vision.



15.5. *“We welcome the Future Merton SPD, giving guidelines for the type of development that is envisaged for the town centre is helpful for our future planning. The message that Merton is pro-business and keen to develop increased office space in Wimbledon is encouraging. As an investor in the area we are pleased to see that Merton are embracing the opportunities that Crossrail 2 will bring and that if Crossrail 2 does not materialise, then the intention is still to redevelop the station area and grow the town centre. The redevelopment of Wimbledon station and the associated retail area would be a welcome benefit to both the business and the local community. We would particularly welcome an increase in pedestrianised and landscaped areas to enhance the local environment. We like the idea of buildings with active street frontages and think the taller buildings are well positioned in the central area and over the railway tracks.” (Wimbledon landowner)*

### **Response to the comments**

15.6. The representations from landowners are supportive of the Future Wimbledon vision. The main concerns were that the building height guidance was too prescriptive, and site by site issues, such as the impact of the road bridge linking Queen’s Road to Alexandra Road.

15.7. The SPD is guidance and landowners should be reassured that any applications will

be assessed on their individual merits and in the context of local, regional and national planning policies.

### **Suggested changes**

15.8. Following careful consideration of the comments from landowners these changes have been made to the SPD:

- Review the wording in the building height guidance section to ensure that it is not overly-prescriptive and is compliant with the NPPF.
- Emphasise that the building heights shown are guidance only and individual schemes will be assessed on their merits and viability constraints.

## 16 CONCLUSION

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16.1. The online questionnaire was a mixture of tick box responses and text comments. Our analysis of the data shows that where many people ticked “disagree” or “strongly disagree” with a section of the SPD, the text comments revealed that there was wider support for the plan and its themes. The issue of building height, commercial development and the uncertainty of Crossrail 2 tended to dominate people’s comments on the plan, despite clear support for greening and sustainability, public realm improvements, and design quality.

16.2. With regards to building height, respondents felt that 8-10 storeys was an acceptable height for new developments in Wimbledon town centre. The SPD accords with this view. The vast majority of buildings are shown in the plan as fewer than 10 storeys, with the exception of those backing on to the railway tracks at St George’s Road, which is the least sensitive area for growth.

16.3. The vision and priorities of the Future Wimbledon SPD are aligned with the “Build back better” proposals being suggested. In the SPD there is a greater focus on the experience of town centre by creating a mixed use neighbourhood for retail, office, community, culture, leisure and residential. The plan also recognises the importance of the public realm in supporting town centre uses, pop-up events and experiences.

16.4. The changes proposed following a review of the consultation responses can be summarised into the following points:

- Greater emphasis on the Climate Emergency throughout the plan.
- Removal of over-track development, which was also the tallest proposed buildings. The maximum height is now 12 storeys.
- Guidance showing building height in metres.
- Review of the SPD in the context of Covid-19 recovery.

16.5. The next step for the Future Wimbledon SPD is for it to be adopted by Council in November 2020.



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