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**From:** C [REDACTED] Gray [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** 04 January 2019 11:29  
**To:** Future Merton  
**Subject:** Masterplan

Please see below our comments on the draft masterplan.

C [REDACTED] and T [REDACTED] Gray  
[REDACTED]

The draft Wimbledon Masterplan contains proposals which would significantly alter the nature and size of Wimbledon town centre. Commercial usage is envisaged to increase massively, with a doubling in building heights in some areas, from 7 up to potentially 18 storeys.

We consider this scale of development to be wholly inappropriate for Wimbledon town centre. There is minimal discussion of the impact of this on neighbouring residential areas but it would change the essential character of Wimbledon, whilst exacerbating current traffic congestion and pollution issues in the town centre, despite the masterplan's stated aspiration to reduce or reroute traffic volumes. We support the Masterplan's emphasis on improved quality and design of buildings and the aspiration for a greener, more attractive town centre. Also the desire for more independent shops, but this is at odds with the scale of development which is envisaged.

**1. Building heights**

The Masterplan refers frequently to a need for more “mid-rise” buildings in the town centre to enable commercial growth.

In our view buildings exceeding 7-8 storeys high will tower over the existing townscape and radically alter the skyline for residents – not just those living in neighbouring streets but also those further afield.

The building heights proposed in the Masterplan – particularly around St George's Road, Worple Road, the station and the area around the current YMCA – are significantly higher than existing buildings and represent much more than “a moderate increase in heights”. It is disingenuous to suggest otherwise.

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

## **2. Evidence supporting scale of development**

The Masterplan contains little or no data to justify the suggested need for a projected extra 8,000 jobs and proposed 50% increase in commercial space in the town centre. Growth in demand appears simply to be assumed, on the basis that ‘if we build it, they will come’. Indeed recent local developments have included the conversion of several office blocks which have sat empty, into social housing. Clearly Merton needs to maintain Wimbledon as a thriving town centre. But this needs to be based on a planning philosophy which keeps in balance the number and type of jobs in Wimbledon with the shops, bars, restaurants and other facilities required by residents and visitors. We must also take account of new technologies; new, more flexible ways of working; and changing shopping patterns, which taken together are likely to reduce the demand for traditional office and retail space over the next 20 years.

This kind of analysis is absent from the Masterplan. Without it, there is a risk of encouraging speculative commercial development, which is out of keeping with the rest of Wimbledon town centre and which places unsustainable pressure on the town’s infrastructure and services.

## **3. A new Croydon**

In the Mayor of London’s draft London Plan, Wimbledon is defined as a “Major Centre”, with high commercial and residential growth potential.

In the draft Masterplan, however, 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.

This scale of development is incompatible with the proximity of the residential areas. The town centre is bounded by residential streets on all sides, making large scale redevelopment problematic. We do not believe residents want Wimbledon town centre to become a “mini Croydon”.

## **4. Crossrail 2**

We recognise that 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 document does, that “This masterplan is not reliant on Crossrail 2”. In light of the current delays to Crossrail 1 Crossrail 2 is looking less likely to be approved.

In reality, the levels of investment needed to develop Wimbledon in line with the Masterplan’s vision are heavily dependent on Crossrail 2 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.

We therefore suggest that the Masterplan should not be put to Merton’s full Council for approval nor adopted until decisions have been taken by Government regarding Crossrail 2.

## **5. Parking**

Whilst not wishing to encourage driving into Wimbledon, thought should be given to the impact of reducing of parking spaces in the town centre as a result of building on car parks since elderly and

disabled residents and visitors need setting down points and parking facilities to enable access to a concert hall or the theatre (which is currently very difficult).

## **6. New concert hall**

The Masterplan mentions plans developed by the Wimbledon Concert Hall Trust for a new performance venue in Wimbledon.

We believe that a world-class performance venue would be a huge asset to the cultural life of Wimbledon. It would also help to attract visitors and businesses to Wimbledon, increase the number of overnight stays and boost overall economic activity. We would ask the Council to give the Concert Hall proposal more enthusiastic support and more prominence in the Masterplan.

## **7. Consultation process**

Given the importance of this subject to everyone who lives and works in Wimbledon, we consider that the consultation process for the Masterplan has been seriously inadequate. It is not enough to publish a 136-page document on the Council website, place a hard copy in libraries and put a small piece in 'My Merton'. With such 'passive' methods of communication, most residents are likely to remain in ignorance.

For the next version of the Masterplan, we suggest that the Council should consult again and should be more proactive by writing to all residents at their home addresses, as well as mounting pop-up information stands in the Piazza and Centre Court. The Council should have email addresses for all residents who pay council tax, hold library cards, use green bin provision and other services. This should also be used as a communication for such major plans and consultation.

## **8. Overall Plan. Places of Unique/Major places of worship**

It is very disappointing that your plan only makes reference to the relatively new Buddhist Temple and Mosque in Morden. No reference is made of any Christian places of worship for example the ancient and historic St Mary's Merton Park.

## **9. Housing**

There needs to be more effort to plan for increased housing in Wimbledon both social and private.