

04 January 2019

Delivered by email.

Future Merton Team
London Borough of Merton
Civic Centre
London Road
Morden
Surrey
SM4 5DX

Dear Sir, Madam,

FUTURE DRAFT LOCAL PLAN REPRESENTATIONS

We act on behalf of Hermes Property Unit Trust and have been instructed to submit representations to the Future Wimbledon Masterplan consultation document, consultation for which ends on 6th January 2019.

Our comments and observations are made within the context of paragraphs 28-36 of the National Planning Policy Framework (2018) in terms of soundness i.e. positively prepared, justified, effect and consistent with national policy.

Strategic Objective 6: Economy

We support the general thrust of the policy, especially the support for commercially viable schemes.

Policy N3.6 Wimbledon Town Centre

We support the policy but would welcome the addition of some text that recognises the viability of development within the context of Strategic Objective 6. We consider that the criterion C is too rigid in setting design expectations for height, scale and massing. This should instead allow flexibility on a site by site basis in terms of site constraints, surrounding precedents and viability considerations.

Although reference is made to the Future Wimbledon Masterplan workshops, no reference is made to the Future Wimbledon Masterplan consultation document (consultation for which runs in parallel to the Stage 2 of the draft Local Plan), and the role or status of that Masterplan, once adopted, will have in guiding development.

Moreover, Policy N3.6 contains a list of 'Wimbledon Sites' that do not feature in the Future Wimbledon Masterplan. Moreover, the Policy advocates midrise contextual architecture, whereas the Future Wimbledon Masterplan provides a guide on heights which varies significantly across Wimbledon Town Centre.

The list of sites seems to exclude other sites that are either subject of extant planning consents or pre application dialogues with Officers of London Borough of Merton, principally, 12-26 Hartfield Road.

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Stow-cum-Quy
Cambridge, CB25 9AU

In light of the above context, it is considered that policy expectations should be consistent between the draft Local Plan and Future Wimbledon Masterplan, including reference to the latter document and its status (once adopted) in the draft Local Plan.

Such an approach would strengthen the policy and would achieve the aims of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (2018), paragraph 122 which encourages support for development that makes efficient use of land, including local market conditions and viability.

Moreover, we consider that this approach would ensure the tests at paragraph 35 (including criteria a-d) of the NPPF are met.

Strategic Policy LP D5.1

We consider the general thrust of the policy to be in accordance with the NPPF. However, within the context of our comments above, we consider that criterion iii should make reference to viability considerations and at criteria v make reference to the balanced consideration of development within the context of public benefits as set out in Sections 6 (i.e. significant weight should be placed on the need to support economic growth and productivity) and Section 16 in relation to balancing harm to heritage assets versus the public, economic and social benefits.

In terms of the Tall Buildings section of the Policy, and in the context of comments made above regarding the role and status of the Future Wimbledon Masterplan, it is unclear as to the definition of 'tall building' - this requires clarification. We do however consider that the criteria set out in f) of the policy are clear and are therefore supported.

In relation to Policies D5.2 and D5.3, we consider these to be overly repetitive and restrictive. Although mention of the Borough's masterplans is made, these in themselves do not necessarily provide a consistent framework. It is considered that the policies are too open to subjective assessment by the decision maker.

Policy Ec7.1 Economic Development

We fully support the principle of this policy as being in line with the NPPF i.e. the presumption in favour of sustainable economic development, especially investment and job creation.

Policy Ec7.5 Local Employment Opportunities

We support increasing skills and opportunities for local residents. However, the draft Local Plan as a whole must make reference to the cumulative impact and financial and viability pressures (such as other Section 106 or CIL requirements) on developments and should allow some flexibility when applying this policy.

Policy Tc7.7 Protection of shopping facilities within designated shopping frontages

Although we support the general thrust of Policy Tc7.6, we consider that the restrictions imposed on non-A1 uses by Tc7.7 to be unjustified and not supported by a robust evidence base. As is well documented, the 'high street' is coming under significant pressure due to the loss of high profile national retailers. In order to sustain the vitality and viability of town centres, alongside promoting leisure and cultural facilities and the night time economy, town centres should be given the maximum flexibility to evolve and adapt in a fast changing economic environment. Arbitrary 12 month marketing of units, does not provide this flexibility, or does restricting the percentage of units or frontages that can operate in non A1 use.

We contend that the policy as currently worded conflicts with the NPPF and is not justified, positively prepared and as such is not sound.

We would welcome the opportunity of commenting on further stages of the Plan. In the meantime, if you have any queries or require additional information please do not hesitate to contact me at this office.

Yours sincerely

Sid Hadjoannou
Director

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