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Local Plan - Colliers Wood - Merton stage 2

Dear Planners at Merton Council,

I have lived at the same address in Colliers Wood for almost 18 years and have recently become very engaged with local residents in strong opposition to the proposed development at the MertonVision site in Clarendon Road ("The Guardian Centre").

The first comment I would make is that, despite meeting local councillors and talking with numerous neighbours, I only heard about the Local Plan for Colliers Wood TODAY (the last day in which you have asked for comments)! I don't think anyone else in the group was aware of it either. I would therefore encourage you to better engage with residents to make them aware that there is a consultation process going on. Like most people I suspect, I do not read the local paper, nor visit the local library, or wherever else you might have posted news about this.

I'm delighted to read about the desire for a "thriving and attractive District Centre" at Colliers Wood. As a long-time resident, I have of course seen considerable and very welcome, positive change in the area over time. All the stated aims in the Policy N3.1 document are well considered and articulated. Can't say I would have thought the "town centre" was along the River Wandle – to my mind, the town centre is around the tube station and up the high street, not into Merton High Street.

More importantly, it would appear to me that this policy is not joined up with the decision-making by the Merton CCG with relation to the Octopus scheme. There is no mention/provision in this Local Plan to include the proposed redevelopment of the Guardian Centre! They have to be considered together.

I note that you are looking to increase 5,000 homes in the area. However, that has to be accommodated with local services. You cannot have a master plan that does not include the new GP surgery. The new GP surgery HAS to be on the high street. It has to be well serviced by public transport (as opposed to the Guardian Centre which has ZERO public transport, is half a mile from the nearest bus stop and has NO parking for non-residents during working hours – you can't expect elderly and infirm people to WALK nor suddenly put on buses down a residential-only area with no through-road). It has to be at the heart of the community. You are looking at increasing restaurants and gyms etc, but you have not taken into consideration health services, which is very odd. If there are opportunities for new homes in the CW area, there simply HAS to be opportunities for the new GP centre.

When we discussed with three councillors (together) about the community centre potentially being repurposed for the GP surgery, the universal response was that it was well used as is and couldn't be touched. And yet, I read that you are planning for commercial and residential uses on that site?! That would be outrageous. It is currently owned by Merton Council and the current CW GP surgery is virtually next door so location is not an issue. It is a large building and could be redeveloped for the GP surgery to include the community centre. If not, why not move the community centre to the Guardian Centre? In the same meeting with the councillors, they suggested that there were no other potential sites yet found in Colliers Wood – and yet, the Local Plan talks about extensive development and repurposing opportunities in the area, so that statement that "there is nowhere else" is simply incorrect and misleading.

What about Brown & Root Phase 2? I remember reading about plans years ago for library and even a police station being based in the Tower, so why not a GP surgery right in the heart of Colliers Wood with bus stops and underground station RIGHT OUTSIDE? After all, the surgery was supposed to go above the library until the doctors 'forgot' the sign the contract (as I understand it). Alternatively, why not put the surgery above the tube station "site CW4" on the same basis (council owned land as well). Or if you are looking at developing new parts of the Priory Retail Park, why not put it there? I'm sure there are more places to consider. Just looking along Merton High Street shows dilapidated sites crying out for investment.

I strongly believe that you need to incorporate health services, specifically the proposed merged Lavender Fields and Colliers Wood GP surgeries, into the local plan for this area. The MCG/Octopus scheme cannot be determined independently of the greater vision for Colliers Wood, especially when the site chosen is completely impracticable and made primarily, as we understand it, as apparent fall-back, last-resort decision (i.e. by default not by design), because you simply wouldn't masterplan a GP surgery in the middle of a quiet, residential-only area with poor public transportation. Your plan shows that there is room for consideration of alternative sites in Colliers Wood, and I would encourage both parties to work together on this.

Thank you for your time and consideration.