

From: A [redacted] Maries [redacted]
Sent: 06 January 2019 23:05
To: Future Merton
Subject: Future Wimbledon Masterplan

Dear Sirs

As a member of the Wimbledon Society, the Friends of Wimbledon Town Centre and the Wimbledon Town Centre Neighbourhood Forum Steering Group, I fully support the various comments submitted to you by those organisations.

I have the following additional points to make as an individual resident of Merton, where I have lived for the past 35 years.

1. Historically, Wimbledon has developed essentially as a residential borough. It is clear that residents and visitors alike value their history and heritage and wish to see it preserved as far as possible. The process of consultation has not accounted adequately for these views, and has resulted in a top-down approach to planning, little improved from plans dating from the previous century.
2. Residents certainly do not want Wimbledon to become a Metropolitan centre like, say, Kingston or Croydon, dominated by soulless and excessively high-rise buildings introduced at an overbearing density. The professed emphasis on intense commercial development is unwelcome, and could be a catastrophically costly disaster for the town if shopping and office occupancy patterns shift significantly in the future. No evidence is presented as to the economic viability of the Council's plans.
3. There is no explanation of how roads would be improved to cope with a 50% growth in office space. It is generally agreed that, at present, the town centre is over-dominated by road traffic, much of which has no business there, and which contributes greatly to air pollution. Traffic needs to be reduced in volume rather than rerouted, but no realistic plans have been proposed for either option. Neither is there any mention of allowing for future changes in public and private transport options, such as driverless cars or electric vehicles, nor any tangible plans for making cycling and walking safer and more attractive.
4. The immense impact (positive as well as negative) of the possible advent of Crossrail 2 has largely been ignored, even though the Masterplan seems to rely on investment generated by CR2, and proposes building over the station. Under the current scheme, its construction would paralyse the town centre for 6-8 years, leaving a legacy of blight and lost business which could last for a generation or more. Until government plans for CR2 are settled, the Masterplan should be revised to show options with and without CR2.
5. Surprisingly, there is no mention of sustainability or of the influence of climate change on development plans, topics which both carry statutory obligations for the Council which cannot be ignored. This is an alarming omission which must surely be rectified in future revisions of the Masterplan.
6. There is no explanation of how implementation of the Masterplan would be phased in order to minimise disruption to residents and other occupants of the town centre and to reduce construction costs.

Residents - who are, after all, the permanent occupants of Wimbledon's town centre - have not had an adequate voice in the development of the Masterplan. I suggest that the Masterplan as currently presented should be considered as an interim document, to taken back to residents for a properly proactive consultation process, before a revised version is submitted to Merton's Cabinet.

Yours

A [redacted] Maries
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