

**From:** NWWRA [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** 05 January 2019 12:11  
**To:** Future Merton  
**Subject:** Response to the Future Wimbledon Masterplan

**North West Wimbledon Residents Association**

Dear Merton Council

We would like to comment on the Wimbledon Town Centre Future masterplan as a local residents' association, whose members consider Wimbledon as their local town centre. The plan has much positive in it and we are grateful for this opportunity to comment.

**Major centre v Metropolitan centre**

The Mayor of London's draft London plan defines Wimbledon as a major centre, with high commercial and residential growth potential. The Future Wimbledon plan is for a move to recognise Wimbledon as a Metropolitan Centre and increase the commercial offering. The area is a residential one with central trading and businesses within a defined area, serving the residential area and visitors arriving by the transport system. It would be disappointing if it was turned into a huge commercial area. And this idea should only be considered should CR2 be brought to Wimbledon. As a centre within the great London area Wimbledon has a unique opportunity to be an entity as a major town centre, while retaining its unique character. If it were further outside London, as in Croydon and Sutton, that would be an understandable move for the larger commercial zone.

The change of working styles, with new technologies has made a daily commute often unnecessary. This will surely continue to grow. To build offices which take no account of this major change will result in large empty structures as we see in many parts of London and around. There does not appear to be proof that there is demand for more. Equally increased online shopping is known to be reducing visits to the high street. More offices and shops may well not be the way forward over the next 20 years.

**Transport hub**

A more reliable and organised transport hub would make sense, allowing for buses, taxis and dropping/pick up at the station.

**Building height**

The local desire, as expressed in initial forums on the Future Wimbledon plan, for lower height buildings, of good quality, seems to have been ignored. Existing blocks, such as the CIPD building are considered quite high enough. To create taller blocks, would dominate the unique view from the hill, and would create shaded windy areas, which we see in the new developments in central London around Vauxhall and would result in the loss of the unique, historic character of Wimbledon town.

**Green environment**

Wimbledon town lacks good greenery. Many more trees and pocket parks could create spaces which would vastly enhance the area as well as improve air quality. The short term view of many councils of planting small trees is a tragedy. The impact of potentially large trees on pollution and the environment is well known. Sitting or walking under the canopy of a tree lined street has many benefits and would encourage visitors to enjoy Wimbledon town and linger rather than short visits for particular purposes.

## **Cultural contribution**

The futureplan talks of culture in terms of films, theatre and the Merton Art trail and the music festival. But an excellent concert hall for music all year round with good accoustics and an arts centre with meeting areas and perhaps conference facilities on the Hartfield Road site could be a huge bonus to the area. The site would be easily accessible from the station drawing visitors to the area, as well as providing much need year round culture opportunities for residents of all ages to enjoy , without having to travel into London.

## **Impact of CR2**

We understand the need to review planning policy from time to time. However to claim that the futureplan is not reliant on Crossrail 2 seems questionable. CR2 will enable , even enforce, major redevelopment, of the town. Without CR2 much of the futureplan is not viable. A good plan for the town, would consider the overall essence of Wimbledon town, resisting piecemeal development which does not take into consideration visual coherence in its design. Building over the railway does clearly have advantages, but should not be at a cost of the existing character.

yours sincerely

J ■ Watkins

Chair NWWRA