

[REDACTED]

From: N [REDACTED] Schofield [REDACTED]
Sent: 10 December 2018 14:09
To: Future Merton; [REDACTED]
Cc: Councillor Paul Kohler; Councillor Hayley Ormrod; Councillor David Dean; Councillor Anthony Fairclough; Councillor Simon McGrath; Councillor Nigel Benbow; Councillor Ben Butler; Councillor Eleanor Stringer; Councillor Daniel Holden; Councillor David Simpson; Councillor David Williams; Councillor Thomas Barlow; Councillor Andrew Howard; Councillor Najeeb Latif; stephen.hammond.mp@parliament.uk; Ged Curran
Subject: Masterplan Consultation Response
Attachments: Formal response to MasterPlan & Local plan..docx

Notwithstanding a lack of any response from yourselves to my email on this subject of 29th November 2018, , I hereby submit my formal response to the consultation on the Masterplan. This is to be viewed in conjunction with the concurrent but unreferenced therein consultation on the Local Plan and I have therefore submitted it also as a formal response to the Local plan, in a separate email to ensure it is taken account of for both consultations.

If any Councillors cc'd could forward it to a mailing group of all Merton councillors, I would be grateful.

Kind regards,

N [REDACTED] Schofield

[REDACTED]

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WIMBLEDON MASTERPLAN AND MERTON LOCAL PLAN

I write in response to the current residents' consultations on the **proposed Wimbledon Masterplan and the Local Plan (as it effects Wimbledon)**. I do not believe that the information contained therein is truthful, straightforward or reasonably explained, nor have the consultations been properly communicated, nor will any decisions re adoption be taken democratically

Both consultations contain proposals to dramatically alter the nature, design, size and population of the town of Wimbledon – business usage (and therefore footfall, traffic and population) is designed to increase by 50% and the main change to the streetscape is a **doubling in building height** in some areas (which immediately back on to 2 storey Edwardian terraces), from 7 storeys to 14 storeys. *The overall impact of this development, particularly along the area defined as Broadway East, would be akin to the Las Vegas Strip.*

The Local Plan runs to 450 pages and the Wimbledon Masterplan to 136 pages (not including the referenced additional Policies referred to therein). Wimbledon residents are being asked to respond to online-only Plans, which are longer in length than the current Brexit proposal, and few of us are experienced in this area.

The Future Wimbledon team, at a meeting with over 200 concerned residents on 12th November 2018 (the Meeting), pointed out that the Council had to respond to the challenge of promoting “good quality growth” in the town centre, whilst protecting its historic buildings and nearby established residential areas. The Masterplan is apparently about managing this growth, by giving guidance to developers on the appropriate size, type, location and design of new buildings. However, the scale, height and intensity of development proposed in the plan is wholly inappropriate for Wimbledon town centre. It would adversely impact neighbouring residential areas and would change the essential character of Wimbledon, whilst exacerbating current traffic congestion and pollution in the town centre. It is completely contrary to the wishes expressed by residents.

The Local Plan states “Wimbledon is a long, linear town centre set at the bottom of Wimbledon Hill and tightly bound by attractive established residential terraces, some of which are within Conservation Areas” – I am sure that councillors can therefore appreciate the incongruity of Very Tall, Prominent Buildings (as defined in the council's own Tall Buildings Policy 2010) along a narrow strip of land (eg 14 storeys as proposed in Broadway East) surrounded by said residential properties?

My specific comments are listed below:

Content

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At the Meeting, many residents expressed concern about the scale and volume of development planned, transforming Wimbledon into a 'mini Croydon'. Page 69 of the Masterplan says: "Wimbledon does need to become more dense and accept a **moderate increase in heights** to accommodate future growth." The current tallest buildings tend to cap at 7-8 stories and any increase in this will make the new buildings very prominent, dwarfing other buildings and housing in the wide vicinity. **The plans for St Georges Quarter and Broadway East represent more than a doubling in height of existing buildings – this is not a "moderate increase in heights" as defined in the Masterplan.**

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I fully concur with the view expressed by residents, that "*the Masterplan should state unequivocally 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.*"

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streets clean, free of litter, leaves and weeds, as well as ensuring that rainwater can flow freely away down unblocked drains, there should be no question of further development.

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5. Additionally, the dividing up of the town centre into “**Mini Neighbourhoods**” is an arbitrary and undemocratic delineation not agreed or consulted upon. For example, the “neighbourhood” area defined in the Masterplan as Broadway East takes no actual account of the **neighbourhood** (Victorian and Edwardian housing, substantial amount of which is included in a conservation area, parks, schools ie all residential except for the narrow strip that is The Broadway) in its proposal to make this an area earmarked for the building of Very Tall, Prominent Buildings (over 11 storeys as defined in the council’s own Tall Buildings Policy 2010). ie YMCA at 14 storeys
6. Although the Masterplan does state once that Wimbledon is defined as a **Major Centre** in the Mayor’s London Plan, it then arbitrarily decides to refer to the town centre from thence forward as a **Metropolitan Centre**. In fact the latter is capitalised whereas “major” is not. At the Meeting held to discuss the Plan on 12th November it became clear that this was a misleading term and Paul McGarry admitted that Wimbledon was not defined in the London Plan as a Metropolitan centre, but a Major one. The Metropolitan definition has been decided and referenced throughout the Plan by the Future Wimbledon team and this has misled residents reading the Plan into thinking that this a London Plan definition of the town and therefore outside our control. This is not the case. The Local plan has as an aim, “*Strengthening the position of Wimbledon towards being a Metropolitan Centre in south London through the redevelopment of key sites within the centre*” – it was quite clear at the Meeting that this is against the wishes of residents.
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8. The Masterplan includes 25 pages about the history of Wimbledon and also references at length the **workshops held throughout 2017 with residents** (including myself) to determine the future of the Town Centre and *"To shape the priorities for the Masterplan"*. At these workshops, residents consistently expressed serious concerns about Tall Buildings and the plan produced is in direct opposition to these views. Residents' views have definitely NOT *"Helped define the range of priorities and ideas in advance of writing the Masterplan"* - the stated aim of the workshops. Residents specifically stated that they didn't want Wimbledon to look like Croydon.

9. **The YMCA building – Masterplan** - has been slipped into the area map of Building Height as 13-14 stories, with no explanation of this doubling in height. Residents made it abundantly clear 5 years ago that this height is unacceptable and there was huge dissent at the time and the development was abandoned. For this to be slipped in as a tiny coloured dot on a map – an incongruous Very Tall, Prominent Building (as defined in the council's own Tall Buildings Policy 2010), backing on to the residential area of South Park Gardens, stealing light and sunshine from the whole neighbourhood, is manipulative, dishonest and disingenuous. In fact, all questions asked about this at the Residents' Meeting were ignored and the team specifically stated that they had no knowledge of any current plan from the YMCA or its developer partner. I believe from several sources that this is untrue and that residents were intentionally misled at the meeting. Residents will be responding to this plan without believing that there any imminent plans to develop the YMCA. One must also take note of **the precedent that such a development would start** – PAC would not be able to refuse similar sized buildings once this was granted permission.

10. **Local Plan - Site Wi15 YMCA Wimbledon** – please see everything else contained in this response in reference to the proposed YMCA development. Neither the map area nor the text (deliberately?) mentions that this plot is immediately adjacent to residential housing (Trinity and Abbey wards) and a Conservation Area (South Park Gardens) that it would dominate and overshadow. All that is mentioned is that *"The site is visible from South Park Gardens conservation area to the north."* **This needs a lot more emphasis and impact assessment of any development.** It's also on a busy junction. Insufficient parking restrictions already mean that local roads are full of cars using the theatre, cinemas etc in the town centre. Additional eating and recreational sites on this plot would exacerbate this problem. Experience shows that it is nonsense to assume that users of such facilities will all arrive on public transport.

11. **Local Plan - Site Wi8 South Wimbledon Station** makes no mention whatsoever of the proposed nearby new Harris Academy school and its massive impact on station and bus use in the vicinity. This is negligent and needs to be considered carefully with respect to the health and safety of both transport and road users at this busy station and intersection.

Context

12. The Plans as they refer to Wimbledon (& therefore presumably a knock-on financial effect to the rest of the borough), are totally dependent on the existing Crossrail 2 proposals for Wimbledon being agreed. **If Crossrail 2 does not materialise as predicted by the team producing the Plan, then we have the worst possible scenario.** The council will have given Planning Guidance allowing the building of Very Tall, Prominent Buildings (as defined in the

council's own Tall Buildings Policy 2010) down areas of the length of Wimbledon Broadway which will radically and drastically change the nature of the town centre. The increase in traffic will be unmanageable with only one road/ rail crossing – the Wimbledon Station Bridge and, as Paul McGarry stated at the meeting, there is no money for the council to build extra bridges without Crossrail 2 support. Infrastructure will not be in place to afford or manage such redevelopment. These documents should not be adopted until such a decision is more certain. It is right and proper that this potential impact should be planned for, but the Plans should remain as working documents, adapting to circumstances as required until there is further certainty as to the status of CrossRail2. Rushing through any guidance (Masterplan) or statutory interpretation (Local Plan) before CrossRail 2 or Brexit have been decided is hasty and restrictive.

13. See 12 above and without a concurrent, full and proper **Traffic Management Plan**, the Masterplan and Local Plan are both meaningless and incomplete for consultation.

Democracy

14. Any Plans purporting such a drastic change to one of three areas in the borough must surely have the **consent of residents via their democratically elected councillors**. Wimbledon centre wards comprise 10 Conservative Councillors, 2 Labour and 3 LibDems. This is not representative of the general make-up of the council. It's imperative that views expressed by Wimbledon Councillors are paramount in decision-taking which so seriously affects the town centre. Otherwise there is no democratic mandate.

Consultation process itself

15. **Inadequate and meaningless consultation** - At 450 and 136 pages, both plans are too long to consult on meaningfully, with no access to hard copies, and at the same time, and concurrent to a very long and complex consultation about an extension to the Wimbledon tram which will also seriously affect traffic management. In particular, the proposed Local Plan, which I understand has statutory authority, is hardly mentioned within public realm. The Masterplan is also full of spelling and grammar inaccuracies, duplications and inconsistencies which, taken together with a deliberate intention to mislead about building heights and the definition of the town as a Metropolitan Centre, gives residents no faith in the quality of content or context of the document nor the professionals involved in writing it. Neither consultation has been sufficiently publicised by the council. They haven't leafleted residents. No hard copies are available (other than those placed in libraries after I requested such). Given lack of space and quiet in our libraries, together with restricted opening times and size of documents, this is not sufficient and they should be available to residents on request. They aren't. The local newspaper, the Wimbledon Guardian, collapsed and has only recently been relaunched. I haven't spoken to a single resident who receives a hard copy. Local newspapers are no longer sufficient notice of consultation, and social media excludes a large proportion of a society such as Wimbledon residents. Given that a very full and glossy brochure, "Future Merton", is produced and distributed to all households regularly (metallic headlines on cover!), cost cannot possibly be used as an excuse for this paucity of consultation which excludes large sections of the Wimbledon community whose age makes access to lengthy online documents impossible. The current issue of Future Merton, which dropped through doors in November, is a 46 page long magazine. Wimbledon Masterplan is mentioned on p22, with no reference to a consultation or a link to the proposals for comment. Quote from the magazine's current issue, "Wimbledon needs to be greener, to have more mid-rise buildings as opposed to tower

block development and better design principles” – this is the interpretation of the Wimbledon Masterplan (far from the truth) that is all most residents will read. It is dishonest and misleading. Here was a perfect opportunity for full and meaningful consultation which was (intentionally?) overlooked.

Influence of developers on the proposed plans

16. The company partnering with Merton Council to develop Future Merton describes itself on the Future Merton website as, *“Specialises in strategic marketing for regeneration programmes, particularly magazines, websites and events to promote big development schemes to investors, developers, consultants and end-users and to help those companies raise their profile with planning authorities, investors and clients.”* There is no mention here of the electorate – the residents. I feel that the Future Merton team itself has lost sight of the purpose and function of a Local Authority’s remit – the purpose should be represent the electorate, not to promote redevelopment or local business against the wishes of residents, nor to use local funds to pursue their own careers or ambitions. Councillors are charged by the Articles of the Constitution to support the active involvement of citizens in the process of local authority decision-making and they should represent their constituents effectively. Officers’ actions are critical here. Although the voice of the citizens is more widely made known directly to elected councillors, by the time we are involved it is often too late for our involvement to be effective – for example in the case where preplanning advice is given to developers by an officer and we are deliberately excluded from this process or knowledge thereof. (Other LA’s publicly publish preplanning advice given to developers so that the process is totally transparent). I would like to courteously remind officers that all councillors are elected by residents - businesses don’t vote.

Finally, and separately, there is real disengagement and distrust between the people of Wimbledon, the Cabinet and the Future Merton team and this goes back a long way. I suggest it is time to have frank and open discourse about the important issues and rebuild trust to start working properly in partnership for the benefit of all who live in Wimbledon.

Kind regards,

N [REDACTED] Schofield

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

From: N [REDACTED] Schofield [REDACTED]
Sent: 21 December 2018 08:35
To: Future Merton
Subject: Formal Local Plan Consultation Response
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8. The Masterplan includes 25 pages about the history of Wimbledon and also references at length the **workshops held throughout 2017 with residents** (including myself) to determine the future of the Town Centre and *"To shape the priorities for the Masterplan"*. At these workshops, residents consistently expressed serious concerns about Tall Buildings and the plan produced is in direct opposition to these views. Residents' views have definitely NOT *"Helped define the range of priorities and ideas in advance of writing the Masterplan"* - the stated aim of the workshops. Residents specifically stated that they didn't want Wimbledon to look like Croydon.

9. **The YMCA building – Masterplan** - has been slipped into the area map of Building Height as 13-14 stories, with no explanation of this doubling in height. Residents made it abundantly clear 5 years ago that this height is unacceptable and there was huge dissent at the time and the development was abandoned. For this to be slipped in as a tiny coloured dot on a map – an incongruous Very Tall, Prominent Building (as defined in the council's own Tall Buildings Policy 2010), backing on to the residential area of South Park Gardens, stealing light and sunshine from the whole neighbourhood, is manipulative, dishonest and disingenuous. In fact, all questions asked about this at the Residents' Meeting were ignored and the team specifically stated that they had no knowledge of any current plan from the YMCA or its developer partner. I believe from several sources that this is untrue and that residents were intentionally misled at the meeting. Residents will be responding to this plan without believing that there any imminent plans to develop the YMCA. One must also take note of **the precedent that such a development would start** – PAC would not be able to refuse similar sized buildings once this was granted permission.

10. **Local Plan - Site Wi15 YMCA Wimbledon** – please see everything else contained in this response in reference to the proposed YMCA development. Neither the map area nor the text (deliberately?) mentions that this plot is immediately adjacent to residential housing (Trinity and Abbey wards) and a Conservation Area (South Park Gardens) that it would dominate and overshadow. All that is mentioned is that *"The site is visible from South Park Gardens conservation area to the north."* **This needs a lot more emphasis and impact assessment of any development.** It's also on a busy junction. Insufficient parking restrictions already mean that local roads are full of cars using the theatre, cinemas etc in the town centre. Additional eating and recreational sites on this plot would exacerbate this problem. Experience shows that it is nonsense to assume that users of such facilities will all arrive on public transport.

11. **Local Plan - Site Wi8 South Wimbledon Station** makes no mention whatsoever of the proposed nearby new Harris Academy school and its massive impact on station and bus use in the vicinity. This is negligent and needs to be considered carefully with respect to the health and safety of both transport and road users at this busy station and intersection.

Context

12. The Plans as they refer to Wimbledon (& therefore presumably a knock-on financial effect to the rest of the borough), are totally dependent on the existing Crossrail 2 proposals for Wimbledon being agreed. **If Crossrail 2 does not materialise as predicted by the team producing the Plan, then we have the worst possible scenario.** The council will have given Planning Guidance allowing the building of Very Tall, Prominent Buildings (as defined in the

council's own Tall Buildings Policy 2010) down areas of the length of Wimbledon Broadway which will radically and drastically change the nature of the town centre. The increase in traffic will be unmanageable with only one road/ rail crossing – the Wimbledon Station Bridge and, as Paul McGarry stated at the meeting, there is no money for the council to build extra bridges without Crossrail 2 support. Infrastructure will not be in place to afford or manage such redevelopment. These documents should not be adopted until such a decision is more certain. It is right and proper that this potential impact should be planned for, but the Plans should remain as working documents, adapting to circumstances as required until there is further certainty as to the status of CrossRail2. Rushing through any guidance (Masterplan) or statutory interpretation (Local Plan) before CrossRail 2 or Brexit have been decided is hasty and restrictive.

13. See 12 above and without a concurrent, full and proper **Traffic Management Plan**, the Masterplan and Local Plan are both meaningless and incomplete for consultation.

Democracy

14. Any Plans purporting such a drastic change to one of three areas in the borough must surely have the **consent of residents via their democratically elected councillors**. Wimbledon centre wards comprise 10 Conservative Councillors, 2 Labour and 3 LibDems. This is not representative of the general make-up of the council. It's imperative that views expressed by Wimbledon Councillors are paramount in decision-taking which so seriously affects the town centre. Otherwise there is no democratic mandate.

Consultation process itself

15. **Inadequate and meaningless consultation** - At 450 and 136 pages, both plans are too long to consult on meaningfully, with no access to hard copies, and at the same time, and concurrent to a very long and complex consultation about an extension to the Wimbledon tram which will also seriously affect traffic management. In particular, the proposed Local Plan, which I understand has statutory authority, is hardly mentioned within public realm. The Masterplan is also full of spelling and grammar inaccuracies, duplications and inconsistencies which, taken together with a deliberate intention to mislead about building heights and the definition of the town as a Metropolitan Centre, gives residents no faith in the quality of content or context of the document nor the professionals involved in writing it. Neither consultation has been sufficiently publicised by the council. They haven't leafleted residents. No hard copies are available (other than those placed in libraries after I requested such). Given lack of space and quiet in our libraries, together with restricted opening times and size of documents, this is not sufficient and they should be available to residents on request. They aren't. The local newspaper, the Wimbledon Guardian, collapsed and has only recently been relaunched. I haven't spoken to a single resident who receives a hard copy. Local newspapers are no longer sufficient notice of consultation, and social media excludes a large proportion of a society such as Wimbledon residents. Given that a very full and glossy brochure, "Future Merton", is produced and distributed to all households regularly (metallic headlines on cover!), cost cannot possibly be used as an excuse for this paucity of consultation which excludes large sections of the Wimbledon community whose age makes access to lengthy online documents impossible. The current issue of Future Merton, which dropped through doors in November, is a 46 page long magazine. Wimbledon Masterplan is mentioned on p22, with no reference to a consultation or a link to the proposals for comment. Quote from the magazine's current issue, "Wimbledon needs to be greener, to have more mid-rise buildings as opposed to tower

block development and better design principles” – this is the interpretation of the Wimbledon Masterplan (far from the truth) that is all most residents will read. It is dishonest and misleading. Here was a perfect opportunity for full and meaningful consultation which was (intentionally?) overlooked.

Influence of developers on the proposed plans

16. The company partnering with Merton Council to develop Future Merton describes itself on the Future Merton website as, *“Specialises in strategic marketing for regeneration programmes, particularly magazines, websites and events to promote big development schemes to investors, developers, consultants and end-users and to help those companies raise their profile with planning authorities, investors and clients.”* There is no mention here of the electorate – the residents. I feel that the Future Merton team itself has lost sight of the purpose and function of a Local Authority’s remit – the purpose should be represent the electorate, not to promote redevelopment or local business against the wishes of residents, nor to use local funds to pursue their own careers or ambitions. Councillors are charged by the Articles of the Constitution to support the active involvement of citizens in the process of local authority decision-making and they should represent their constituents effectively. Officers’ actions are critical here. Although the voice of the citizens is more widely made known directly to elected councillors, by the time we are involved it is often too late for our involvement to be effective – for example in the case where preplanning advice is given to developers by an officer and we are deliberately excluded from this process or knowledge thereof. (Other LA’s publicly publish preplanning advice given to developers so that the process is totally transparent). I would like to courteously remind officers that all councillors are elected by residents - businesses don’t vote.

Finally, and separately, there is real disengagement and distrust between the people of Wimbledon, the Cabinet and the Future Merton team and this goes back a long way. I suggest it is time to have frank and open discourse about the important issues and rebuild trust to start working properly in partnership for the benefit of all who live in Wimbledon.

Kind regards,

N [REDACTED] Schofield

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]