

## Merton Draft Local Plan Stage 2A

January 2021

Dear Future Merton,

I am a Wimbledon resident with strong community links in South Wimbledon. I was an active member of the South Wimbledon Enhancement Plan (SWEP) which ignited Council recognition of South Wimbledon as a distinctive neighbourhood in its own right with a defined Local Centre.

I would like to start my comments by expressing despair at the Council's inclusion of poor quality developments (former Wimbledon Art College site) as part of South Wimbledon's character. The main photo of South Wimbledon in the Draft Local Plan shows a row of Victorian houses leaned on by a stepped up development. This development built in 2012 is exactly the type of design that mars and harms South Wimbledon's distinctive character. It is an anomaly not the norm, and should not be included as representative of South Wimbledon's character. It is these kinds of generic contemporary developments which do not marry the past with the future that tear up a neighbourhood's character and we do not want to see more of those types in the future life of this draft Local Plan.

There Must be policy included to sway developers from continually copying the poorest of existing designs to justify a swathe of similar unsustainable, unaesthetic, uncharacteristic developments.

One of the main objectives of SWEP was to make South Wimbledon a Destination. What makes a place a destination is its character. This can be especially felt during Covid, with Wimbledon Town Centre largely abandoned with Wimbledon residents heading up to Wimbledon Village to soak up the atmosphere. We HAVE to do more to create the atmosphere and buildings that attract people to visit, spend time, spend money, and leave with memories.

With the regeneration of High Path, the hope is that the estate no longer is an isolated island in South Wimbledon but becomes part of the fabric of the area. This will largely be achieved through design, materials, quality and permeability (ability to walk, cycle).

It is extremely disappointing that in spite of South Wimbledon being recognised as having a distinctive character, developments along Morden Road have been anomalies and eye sores. Applications continue to be submitted to "match" Spur House and the horrific metal-clad so-called Madison Heights and policy N3.5 needs to be worded stronger to ensure that recent anomalies are not blueprints for more unsympathetic and even repulsive designs which do not take the health and welfare of residents into account (hostile environment ground floor flats on Morden Road at former Barclays Bank site).

Policy N3.5 does not address that. All new developments should not disrupt the harmonious feel of South Wimbledon or cause over urbanisation through tall or excessively dense development or remove green space.

Proposed Local Centre boundary for South Wimbledon:

I believe the boundary should be extended to the Kingston Road tram line rather than be truncated at the end of the Cecil Road junction. There are new developments expected at the far end of Kingston Road (The White Hart for one) and some of the most unique shops are still trading along that stretch. Hanna's Piano shop has been there since 1990 and is the Only piano shop between NW

London and Surbiton, and such retailers deserve to be part of the future enhancement of South Wimbledon. The pottery shop has been operating for longer. That end of Kingston Road also has the only Italian delicatessen/chocolatier in Wimbledon. I wish to see the boundary extended.

#### Policy 3.5.11/3.5.12

I disagree that the Nelson Gardens along Morden Road are too far to be well used. One of the MAIN problems with this historic park is the lack of a tap for water. Residents have been trying to lug gallons of water up and down Morden Road or through residents' homes on the Estate to water the plants, especially in summer.

In order to revive, clean up and revitalise Nelson Gardens, the Council (not Idverde) needs to create the means to install a water supply! Residents are keen to create a safe and attractive space at Nelson Gardens which will be MUCH needed with the increased development plans for the area (High Path/Harris School/Morden Road applications). It will be a Vital public space, especially in light of the Climate Emergency we are living through and not doing enough to counter the effects of climate change. The Covid pandemic has also highlighted the need for much open spaces. Please Do Not discount Nelson Gardens as a public space. I can envisage it to be on a par with South Park Gardens in Wimbledon (cared for by residents) BUT we need a water supply tap. Please!

#### Colliers Wood:

I cannot stress enough the need to remove the changed policy wording which now allows buildings to be taller than an already tall Britannia Point. Whatever the intention or vision, it is clear from skyscraper plans aired by Criterion that greed not need is being proposed with no thought to the effect on Colliers Wood and the Wandle Park/trail.

Britannia Point, formerly the Brown and Root building, could not be demolished and remains with its wind tunnels, overshadowing problems. To change policy to allow buildings taller than the current Britannia, is going to create massive issues with microclimate, wind, light and harm to the environment and biodiversity, and accordingly problems on the ground for pedestrians. It doesn't matter how many conditions you place, we all know that in Merton planning, policy is massaged to fit the development.

We need respectful development, preserving the character of the neighbourhood to make it an attractive place to live, work, visit.

#### Elsewhere within the plan:

The first objective for Growth needs to be replaced with. Climate Change. Put Climate Change first, everything else slots into place. This local plan feels like an extension of the last one, but this one should last for the next 10-15 years. It isn't ambitious enough to meet the next 10-15 years. Actually, how long is this local plan for? What years do they cover? There is no easy indication in the documents.

- The documents were clearly not proof-read, corrected, and sentences remain obscure, making it difficult to comment on. There are too many to highlight, but I would be happy to take you through them. The draft Local Plan, like the previous copy, must be cleared by officers after a thorough reading in order to make this consultation valid.
- Preservation of local character and Conservation Areas as a norm.

Yours sincerely,

Below is a New development on Kingston Road which is far more representative of the type of new builds than the old 2012 Wimbledon Art College photo presented with this local plan.

