

[REDACTED]

From: C [REDACTED] Spalding [REDACTED]
Sent: 02 January 2019 15:26
To: Future Merton
Subject: Master Plan AND Local Plan Comments

Importance: High

Dear Merton Council

Thank you for inviting ideas with regard to improving Wimbledon. We have been located in the Village for some 40 years and are most appreciate of anything which will bring life, vibrancy, variety, revenue and footfall back to the area.

I have written separately on the proposal to locate a world-class, Frank-Gehry designed, Concert Hall in the Town Centre and will, here, repeat that I think this is just the sort of initiative and forward thinking which will bring Wimbledon, and Merton, to the attention of the wider world and encourage new people to visit the area on a basis more regular than the increased footfall occasioned by Wimbledon Fortnight.

It has been mooted that such a Hall could be considered elitist? Croquet and Tennis could perhaps have been similarly castigated when they were first introduced to the area many years ago but what a success "Wimbledon" has proved over the decades. A Concert Hall, far from catering only for the few, could provide a venue for children of the Borough to entertain parents and Friends throughout the year; could allow singers of the Borough to gather during the Merton Song Festival (which held its second event in 2018) to include parents, friends and those interested in vocals; could provide a venue for the local Opera Company, local orchestras, Choirs, those who provide musical interactions with groups suffering from dementia (or other forms of mental illness) for which music provides a benefit; could provide practice rooms for local voice and music teachers; could allow the International Wimbledon Music Festival to expand; and oh so much more. It is to be hoped that those considering this option can see the wider advantages and the way those from childhood to advancing years can benefit across Merton. Such a Hall would increase not only reputation but also revenues to local restaurants, coffee bars, hotels, and retailers when persons external to the area came to attend musical, and other, events.

Wimbledon is losing more independent and individual retailers than we gain. The Village in recent times has lost our Bike Shop, Framers, Kitchen Shop. When we first move here there were toy shops, children's clothing outlets, a garden centre, somewhere to buy interesting, and different gifts, privately owned coffee shops and so much more. Now we have chains. Anything Merton could do, perhaps with regard to business rates and rent caps, to entice individual retailers back to the Village and the Town Centre would be such a benefit and could set an example to other Boroughs (as those in the North such as Barnsley are doing). We have lost all Village Banks and have only one Cashpoint to serve the Village; it is unsurprisingly, often out of cash.

We have a Bookshop in the Village which, since the demise of Copperfields, is the only such, independent, outlet available. To introduce an alternative independent to the Centre of Town might be valuable to residents and visitors?

Allowing access, as used to be the case, to those wanting to drop family and friends at the Station would be so helpful? There is, of course, a taxi rank but no way to take an elderly relative, or disabled family

member, to a station entrance. Could this not be accommodated in your Master Plan and, for that matter, in Local Plans

If, as per the Mayor of London's Draft London Plan, Wimbledon is to be a "Major Centre" can this be achieved without losing character, history and individuality? Does Wimbledon need to intensify the *density* of development? Surely it would be optimum to ensure that the character of the area, including ALL of its historic buildings, is retained so that we do not become another cloned, and characterless, town centre?

To this end, hopefully, new buildings (or existing ones being renovated) will not only retain their character but also their *height* so that Wimbledon does not suffer from a blight of "high rise" office (or accommodation) blocks? All surveys indicate that residents favour capping the height of buildings so they remain the same as those being replaced (or developed) and reflect those in the immediate vicinity; that all developments retain, or reflect, the facia character of buildings currently extant; and that our historical buildings are retained in their current guise. Given that the Centre of Town is predominantly residential (rather than commercial or a major retail park) surely any proposed development should respect, indeed build on, the residential and historical aspects of the area rather than overwhelming it with inappropriately dense development?

Once again thank you for providing the opportunity to be involved in the Consultation process. I hope, most sincerely, that decisions made will benefit not only current residents and occupants of Wimbledon but also those of the future which can best be done by retaining that which is unique to Wimbledon; creating new facilities which enhance what is currently available; enrich it via a new, exciting and ambitious project such as the Concert Hall; and avoid the error of becoming soulless via the introduction of inappropriate structures which overwhelm what we have.

Yours faithfully

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