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From: M [Redacted] Holloway [Redacted]
Sent: 04 January 2019 15:21
To: Future Merton
Cc: [Redacted]
Subject: Representations to draft Wimbledon Masterplan
Attachments: Draft LBM Masterplan SPD - Thornsett Response.pdf

Dear Future Merton,

Please find attached a copy of representations made to the emerging Wimbledon Masterplan on behalf of our client, Thornsett Group, relating to their interest in the redevelopment of 196-200 The Broadway as detailed further in the attached letter.

I trust the contents of the letter are sufficiently clear but we'd be more than happy to meet and discuss in greater detail in due course.

Kind regards,

M [Redacted] Holloway [Redacted]

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[Redacted]

[Redacted]

www.danielwatney.co.uk

[Redacted]

[Redacted]

[Redacted]

Date
4 January 2019

Future Merton
London Borough of Merton
Civic Centre
London Road
Morden
SM4 5DX

By Email Only

Dear Sir / Madam

**Representations to the draft Future Masterplan SPD
On behalf of Thornsett Group**

These representations have been prepared on behalf of Thornsett Group and respond to the draft Future Wimbledon Masterplan SPD issued in October 2018. Thornsett are entered into a development agreement with the YMCA St Paul's Group to redevelop their site at 196-200 The Broadway, which falls within the eastern part of the Masterplan Framework; specifically Broadway East (Neighbourhood 12).

Thornsett strongly welcome the preparation of a Masterplan SPD for Wimbledon Town Centre in order to realise the vast development opportunities that are available, particularly along The Broadway in addition to around the station.

It is welcomed that there is recognition within Merton Council that Wimbledon can, and should, become a Metropolitan Town Centre in the future, to reflect its identification as an Opportunity Area in the draft London Plan. Notwithstanding the arrival of Crossrail 2, there is significant redevelopment potential within the town centre, both in the land surrounding the station and also the remainder of the town centre.

Site Description

The site is located in Wimbledon Town Centre to the north of The Broadway, between the junctions of Trinity Road to the east and Stanley Road to the west. The site forms the corner site on The Broadway and Trinity Road which is currently cleared alongside Olympic House at 196-198, an existing office block and the existing YMCA facility at no. 200.

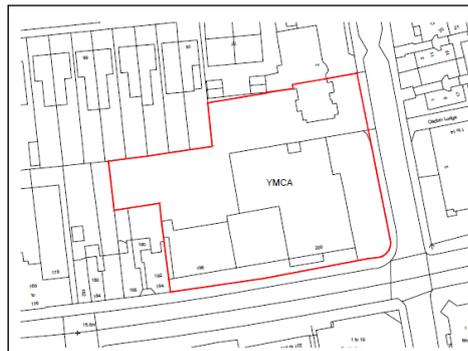


Figure 1: Site Location Plan

Fronting The Broadway, the site currently contains a mix of buildings ranging in height from two to eight storeys. The character of the surrounding area is mixed with uses including commercial floorspace, retail and residential accommodation, alongside important community uses such as the nearby New Wimbledon Theatre and the existing YMCA facility on site.

YMCA Wimbledon

The YMCA has been at the heart of the Wimbledon community since 1874, with the current building opened by the Queen Mother in 1974. The facility has housed and supported thousands of young, vulnerable local people and today provides accommodation for young people from the local area who are referred from LB Merton and No Second Night Out. The building can accommodate up to 111 people, who can stay up to a maximum of two years if necessary. Residents receive support including training and life skills courses, volunteering, arts and drama projects, day trips and personal development programmes and projects.

In addition, there is a Health & Wellbeing centre which delivers over 50 exercise classes a week to the wider community. Children’s activities are provided at Pod2, a multisensory soft play facility for children under 8 years old.

The building also provides room hire for the local community, with rooms suitable for small meetings and informal gatherings for community groups. The facility provides valuable accommodation and facilities for both an established need and also the local community. Delivering the range of services mean that the facility is a major local employer, with over 50 people employed across the site.

The fact that all these services are provided is made even more remarkable given the condition of the building which has deteriorated in recent years, and is now struggling to meet the needs and requirements of such a facility, with running costs becoming prohibitive to the service that the YMCA provides.

Architecturally, it is evident from the Masterplan SPD that the existing building is seen as an eyesore which detracts from the character of the area. There is recognition that the building is of poor aesthetic quality, reflected in the ‘Likes and Dislikes’ figure contained within the Masterplan, identifying the existing YMCA building as a major dislike.



Figure 2: Building Heights Plan Extracted from Masterplan

In addition to the issues with the exterior of the existing building, the property is also no longer fit for purpose and the YMCA have significant ongoing costs to ensure it remains habitable. Refurbishment is not a viable long-term option and given the deterioration, there is an ongoing risk to the provision of the facility.

The future of the site has been debated for a number of years. The YMCA have been exploring redevelopment for the last 7 years and have engaged with 3 separate developers, two of which have not been able to prepare a viable scheme.

Thornsett are able to realise the potential of this site and deliver the re-provision of this valuable facility alongside other significant benefits as further detailed in this letter.

Existing Allocation and Planning Discussions

The site benefits from an allocation in adopted (Site Proposal 62 in the adopted Sites and Policies Plan – 2014) and emerging planning policy (Site Wi15 in the draft Local Plan 2020) which:

- Identifies the site as a gateway to the town centre;
- Assumes early delivery within the Plan period;
- Supports the provision of homeless accommodation alongside the introduction of residential accommodation and other supporting uses.

Pre-application engagement with both LB Merton Officers and the LB Merton Design Review Panel have supported proposals for redevelopment at a high level, subject to considerations over active frontages, exceptional architecture and the provision of public realm.

Exceptional Architecture

Within the draft Masterplan SPD, there is emphasis on exceptional design which is welcomed and to be expected. With exceptional design however comes significant cost in order to deliver a design, and subsequently a built product, which aligns with such aspirations. Therefore the Masterplan SPD needs to reflect the impact that delivering exceptionally designed schemes will have on the viability of a project.

Viability in this instance relates to both the various land uses that are to be sought including active frontages, public realm and affordable housing, but also in terms of the quantum of development (height, scale and massing) that is required to ensure a scheme is brought forward.

There needs to be this explicit recognition within the Masterplan that the delivery of such a high quality scheme will likely have impacts on viability and therefore concessions may need to be made on other aspects. Whilst the various land use requirements such as active frontages and public realm may also be key considerations and deliverables, this may necessitate additional building height or mass to ensure a viable scheme.

Building Height Strategy

The height strategy included within the draft Masterplan currently suggests that part of the YMCA redevelopment would reach 14 storeys on its corner, stepping down to 12 / 10 to the west and 8 to the north.

Whilst this additional height is welcomed on the YMCA development due to the ability to create a gateway to the town centre and also reflecting the need to re-provide the YMCA, it is important that the height strategy is not too prescriptive.

If exceptional architecture is to be sought, which is supported, then as previously stated in these representations, this will come at a cost. By having a building height ceiling, this may prohibit a viable scheme from coming forward on the site. It would be welcomed therefore if this

wording could be re-visited in the context of introducing a height range in certain instances subject to the viability of a project.

If a range of possible building heights is introduced for a particular development site, for example 13 – 16 storeys at the YMCA facility, this provides an element of flexibility for individual schemes which will be so dependent on viability due to the need to deliver exceptional architecture and additional public benefits.

This flexibility could be afforded through alternative approaches such as an explicit reference to the height strategy representing a guide, subject to the viability of each scheme on an individual basis.

Alternatively a non-prescriptive height strategy, which identifies those sites which will be suitable for a taller building (i.e. 10+ storeys) would also allow for such flexibility which is crucial.

Thornsett welcome the recognition that building heights should cluster around the proposed YMCA development and that additional height east on the Broadway is appropriate and supportable. It is important that investment in the Town Centre extends eastwards along The Broadway in order to maximise the public benefit and deliver the objectives of the Masterplan.

Opportunities

A viable scheme on the YMCA site is capable of delivering substantial public benefits, including:

- Provision of much better quality accommodation for the YMCA and securing its future in this location and in the Borough which would otherwise be uncertain;
- Delivering residential accommodation to cross-subsidise the YMCA facility and also meet the pressing need for new homes in the Borough;
- Delivering a building of much higher architectural quality worthy of being at the gateway to the town centre;
- Incorporating public and semi-private realm within the site which would be designed accordingly in order to ensure it would be used and maintained effectively;
- Creation of active frontages along The Broadway which would align with the key aspirations for the Masterplan;

The YMCA site is a crucial part of the Masterplan's success and there is an opportunity to create a landmark building for this invaluable local facility.

There is, thus, strong support from Thornsett for the identification of this within the draft Masterplan, particularly in relation to delivering a taller building than that which exists currently. It is important though that the Masterplan reflects the viability constraints of achieving exceptional design quality and the impact that this could have on delivering such schemes. There should be recognition of viability within the Masterplan and that in order to fund such regeneration, additional height, scale and massing may need to be incorporated into individual schemes.

Introducing alternative measures in the building heights strategy such as a range of appropriate heights, or simply a recognition that a taller building would be appropriate in particular locations, allows for flexibility through the development management process. Heights would be controlled through the pre-application evolution of a scheme in terms of townscape, impact on neighbouring amenity, additional environmental considerations and importantly viability and therefore imposing a ceiling building height within the Masterplan SPD would seem to be overly prescriptive at this stage.

Thornsett are extremely supportive of the Masterplan as it stands, however with some tweaks to the document it is felt that this flexibility will enable a scheme to come forward which delivers the aspirations of the Masterplan, the adopted Site Allocations document and the emerging Local Plan 2020.

We would be delighted to meet to discuss the draft Masterplan, or the contents of these representations in greater detail.

Yours sincerely

M [REDACTED] Holloway MRTPI – Associate Partner
Planning

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