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**From:** B [REDACTED] Finlayson [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** 17 December 2018 15:30  
**To:** Future Merton  
**Cc:** [REDACTED]  
**Subject:** Feedback to Masterplan from local neighbourhood group  
**Attachments:** WTCNF Response to the Wimbledon Masterplan - December 2018.docx

To whom it may concern,

I have attached a response to the Masterplan which represents the views of the Wimbledon Town Centre Neighbourhood Forum (work in progress).

We thank you for your attention and look forward to your response.

Kind regards,

B [REDACTED] Finlayson

Response to the Wimbledon Masterplan (MP) from the local group working towards 'Wimbledon Town Centre Neighbourhood Forum' status (December, 2018)

**Ideas we support:**

1. Overall aims of the MP are welcome, with a world class future-looking vision for a thriving town centre of mixed use development, that is sustainable, attractive, appropriate and respectful of local heritage and character, culturally rich and interesting, with an emphasis on independent retail with improved and green public spaces (which could be used for such gatherings as a weekly farmers' market), for the benefit of residents, businesses and visitors alike.
2. Greening of Wimbledon, including tree and hedge planting, green walls/roofs, new green spaces/ 'parklets' is particularly positive because of the socio-economic net gains of living with nature as part of the urban fabric. It is well known that greening a local environment brings many positive impacts for people's health and wellbeing, for improvements to air pollution, encouraging biodiversity and active travel in improved and greener neighbourhoods, as well as addressing climate change through carbon sequestration.
3. Respecting and preserving Wimbledon's architectural heritage and insisting on design that is of high calibre and consistent with the existing high calibre buildings identified by the community as being worthwhile, and rejecting design identified as mediocre and poor.
4. Respecting the community's desire to limit the height of buildings (7 or 8 stories) so as not to create a tunnel affect that will negatively transform the character of Wimbledon Centre and that can be most unpleasant at street level, including the heat island effect from an increase in high temperatures due to global warming. It is essential that the Council respect and listen to the concerns of local residents and implement a plan that places their priorities at its heart.
5. Development and use of mews streets as car free, offering opportunities for independent businesses. We believe that it is imperative that the Council actively support independent business and consider the use of financial incentives (via reduced business rates) in order to improve upon, what is currently a high street dominated by chain businesses and that is lacking in character and interest. Creating a Wimbledon town centre that is full of interesting independent shops and cafes would create a neighbourhood that is a destination, rather than simply as a place that people pass through on their way to somewhere else.
6. The crucial importance of improved public spaces, which could include a weekly farmers' and independent producers' market and which would encourage localism to boost the local economy and even improve people's diet.
7. A rich cultural offering with a new concert hall/ performance space, currently contemplated for the car park area behind Morrison's supermarket. A new cultural space of this calibre would contribute substantially to vibrant place and destination-making for Wimbledon town centre.

8. Mixed development, with some office (appropriate for future working patterns), housing including affordable housing, that will allow people to live and work in the same community.
9. These new communities to have high calibre communal space, to encourage a sense of place, with appeal at street level for people who live, work and visit here. This space should be appropriate for all ages, and include green play areas for children and families. The MP must address the health and wellbeing issues of the 21<sup>st</sup> century: air quality, obesity, loneliness, depression, anxiety. Well designed, traffic free and green public spaces can tackle all of these and make this MP truly visionary.

**Areas of concern and omissions:**

1. In the draft Masterplan, Merton Council states that it would like to see Wimbledon recognised as a “Metropolitan Centre”, allowing much larger-scale development akin to centres like Croydon or Kingston. This is undesirable and represents a threat to the future of Wimbledon town centre as a balanced neighbourhood.
2. We are concerned that the plans for ‘greening’ of Wimbledon Town Centre as part of the MP are not being made a *mandatory* requirement for developers and instead are only “*encouraged*” (p. 68) according to the language of the plan. ‘Greening’ Wimbledon must be attached to planning permission for new developments or it will be interpreted as optional instead of the first priority as identified by the community. (Masterplan Priorities – Top 10 ideas for Wimbledon)
3. The MP only specifies economic growth and ‘good’ growth, the meaning of which is not specified and is silent on sustainability and sustainable growth. This is a shocking omission and needs to be rectified, particularly in light of the UN IPCC’s most recent report underlining the short timeframe and urgency for action required to mitigate global warming and decarbonise the economy. Given the gravity of the impacts of climate change and given the UK’s legal obligations pursuant to the Climate Change Act and the National Planning Policy Framework, it is incumbent upon local authorities to incorporate principles of sustainability and zero carbon into their town planning.
4. The level of economic activity required to sustain the town centre needs to be balanced with the interests of the residential community. This must be based on analysis of likely future flexible ways of working and changing shopping patterns.
5. The public consultation identified traffic intervention as priority number six. The plan confirms that Wimbledon Town Centre is traffic dominated and that “detailed traffic modelling and options will need to be developed in future” (p. 72). The issue of traffic congestion and its impact on air quality has been identified as a serious problem in Wimbledon town centre. We know that London, including the Borough of Merton, suffers from illegal levels of air pollution, creating a public health emergency. This urgent issue can only be addressed by significant reductions in vehicular emissions and brake dust. It is therefore a priority that the Council carry out traffic modelling, considering all options for traffic reduction, re-routing and filtering, including opportunities for pedestrianisation. There is no way that the MP can state that

pedestrianisation “may not be possible or desirable” (p. 72) without the necessary traffic modelling and options identified for future undertaking. There are, of course, many examples of best practice for pedestrianisation that indicate multiple benefits for the community, including increased footfall for local businesses. We are therefore totally dismayed that this has not been carried out as a priority and as the basis for future development plans. Without dealing with the severe problem of traffic congestion and its consequent impacts on air quality, the MP will be fundamentally compromised and unsatisfactory.

6. The MP does not provide adequately for safe cycling, in the way of safe cycle paths that are separate from footpaths and vehicular traffic that are joined up throughout the borough and adjoining boroughs. In order to encourage cycling for all ages, the MP must make the case for adequate infrastructure, such as bikes to be loaned and bike racks.
7. There is inadequate provision for the long term, future-proofing of car travel, in the way of electrification infrastructure, car clubs and more localised and renewable energy provision. What will this look like and how will this impact on development plans?
8. The MP must guard against giving priority to the development of high office/commercial towers. There is real concern from residents of Wimbledon for tall buildings (ie above 7-8 stories) that significantly change the character of the town centre and surrounding neighbourhoods. New buildings of more than 7-8 storeys will be unacceptable due to their likely visual impact, their incongruity with the context of existing historic buildings, and the increase in traffic congestion and pollution caused by such over-development. Note Priority number 2, identified during the public consultation as the importance of “mid-rise contextual architecture”, number 3 “high quality architecture” and number 4 “public space”.
9. Although the document states that “[t]his masterplan is not reliant on Crossrail 2”, the levels of investment needed to develop Wimbledon in line with the Masterplan’s vision seem to be heavily dependent on Crossrail 2 going ahead. This is particularly the case in relation to dealing with traffic problems. Either the masterplan should not be adopted by Merton Council until decisions have been taken by Government regarding Crossrail 2, or it should be tailored for possible futures that include one in which Crossrail 2 is not built.

These are our comments. Thank you for your attention. We look forward to your response.