

EXAMINATION OF THE MERTON LOCAL PLAN

INSPECTORS' MATTERS, ISSUES AND QUESTIONS- STAGE 2 HEARINGS

MATTER 7: NEIGHBOURHOOD POLICIES AND HEALTHY PLACES

STATEMENT ON BEHALF OF BATTLES AREA RESIDENTS' ASSOCIATION (BARA)

The Battles Area Residents' Association represents the interests of households on the Battles Estate, Wycliffe, Ridley and Latimer Roads and the neighbouring main roads including Merton Road, Merton High Street and Haydons Road. Consequently, the area we cover is roughly one third to one quarter of what is generally regarded as South Wimbledon.

The pandemic has highlighted the importance of communities and neighbourhoods and the need to promote the health and wellbeing of all ages. We have made representations at each stage of the Draft Local Plan which seek to strengthen the Plan's neighbourhood policies specifically in relation to South Wimbledon to ensure that development protects and enhances local character, strengthens local communities and meets the needs of existing and future residents whilst promoting a strong local economy.

Issue (i): Are the Plan's neighbourhood policies justified, effective, and consistent with national policy?

1. Are the boundaries of neighbourhoods included in the Plan justified?

We welcome that the Council has taken into account our previous representations and the Plan now recognises South Wimbledon as a distinctive neighbourhood. However, whilst we are pleased to see the boundary of South Wimbledon has been amended and extended to better reflect the character and homogeneity of the area, we are of the view that further revisions are necessary.

The boundary as currently proposed now includes Wycliffe Road, Ridley Road and Latimer Road but cuts through the centre of Haydons Road Recreation Ground and excludes the eastern part of Quicks Road and the full area covered by the Battles Area Residents Association. We consider this to be illogical- particularly the exclusion of half of the recreation ground which makes a significant contribution to the character of the neighbourhood and serves the whole of South Wimbledon. We are of the view that the boundary of South Wimbledon is further amended as shown in red on the following plan extract.



Figure 1: Proposed revised boundary to South Wimbledon

2. Is the site allocation relevant to South Wimbledon Station (Wi8) included in the correct section of the Plan?

We are of the view that Site Wi8 (South Wimbledon Underground Station) has **not** been included in the correct section of the Plan. It is centrally located within South Wimbledon and should be moved to this section of the Plan. This would be more logical as development at South Wimbledon Station is referenced in Policy N7.1 which relates specifically to South Wimbledon. The future of this site is key to the regeneration of South Wimbledon and it must not be considered in isolation. We would also suggest that a masterplan is required to show how it would integrate with the Local Centre and wider neighbourhood, in particular the High Path Estate, and deliver key public realm improvements and other local benefits.

The Council should work in collaboration with Transport for London and the developers of the High Path Estate (Clarion Housing) in the preparation of the masterplan and development proposals and seek to bring the site forward in line with the phased redevelopment of the adjacent High Path Estate. The local community should be fully engaged from the outset in shaping these proposals and this should be clearly referenced in the site allocation.

3. Are the Plan's neighbourhood policies justified, effective and consistent with national policy?

We believe the Neighbourhood Policies are justified and consistent with national policy. We strongly support the promotion of healthy and active neighbourhoods with a range of activities including access to quality green space and leisure facilities and the concept of the 20 minute neighbourhood. We believe such a neighbourhood can be created in South Wimbledon with the revitalisation of the Local Centre, enhancement of green spaces and public realm improvements.

However, whilst we are supportive of the Neighbourhood Policies and the key priorities for South Wimbledon as set out in Chapter 01B p.20 we feel these can be further strengthened to provide greater clarity and would wish to see the first bullet point amended as follows:

- *Making more efficient and intensive use of land, taking opportunities to provide a mix of uses, including new homes (especially affordable homes) and affordable and flexible employment floor space provided that new development is respectful of local character and context and the necessary infrastructure is provided to meet the needs of new and existing communities.*

We would also like to add an additional priority which we believe is consistent with national policy:

- *Promoting the health and wellbeing of residents through the enhancement of green spaces and improved access to recreational facilities.*

We are generally supportive of the objectives for South Wimbledon set out in Policy N3.5, however we would again like to propose some further amendments to these as follows:

- Add to Improving public realm and public space- *'enhancing the community and biodiversity value of green spaces'*
- Add additional objective- ***Enhancing local character and heritage: Promote new development which respects and enhances local character and opportunities to celebrate the area's unique local heritage***

We are disappointed that no amendments have been made to Policy N7.1 in response to our previous representations and we would again request consideration is given to the following amendments. In particular, we feel very strongly that reference should be included to Haydons Road Recreation Ground given that it has now been recognised by the Local Planning Authority as being within the boundary of South Wimbledon in the Stage 3 Local Plan. We would also suggest that the policy should make clear that South Wimbledon Station has been identified as a site allocation (Ref: Wi8). We believe these changes would provide greater clarity and certainty to developers and decision makers and are consistent with national policy.

Proposed amendments to Policy N7.1:

'Recognising South Wimbledon as a distinctive neighbourhood in its own right

We will do this by:

- a. Proposing a new and improved Local Centre at the heart of the South Wimbledon, focussed around the underground station and the junction where Morden Road, Merton Road, Kingston Road and Merton High Street meet;*
- b. Supporting shops, services and businesses commensurate with a Local Centre, particularly those that serve the day-to-day needs of local residents;*
- c. Supporting developments and occupiers that help improve or strengthen local character, reflecting the area's rich architectural history or providing a modern interpretation which respects heritage assets and local character;*
- d. Support developments in the Local Centre that create a well-designed shopfront in accordance with Merton's shopfront guidance and encouraging landowners and businesses fronting Merton High Street, Kingston Road, Morden Road and Merton Road to improve their shopfronts and building facades;*
- e. Supporting measures to enhance and maintain the streetscene and public realm in South Wimbledon, ~~particularly including~~ along the main roads where most travel takes place, including the provision of waste disposal facilities to prevent street litter;*
- f. Encouraging measures that help to minimise and mitigate pollutants associated with the busy road network, including planting and green cover, measures to encourage walking and cycling and, electric vehicle charging points;*
- g. Protecting and enhancing the public open space at Nelson Gardens and Haydons Road Recreation Ground and improving links to Abbey Rec, Wandle Park and other nearby open spaces*
- h. Support well designed development commensurate with the excellent public transport access of the area of a scale and form which is respectful of local character and context*
- i. Support improvements to the transport infrastructure that will help to reduce road congestion and improve the public realm, particularly for pedestrians and cyclists;*
- j. ~~Work with~~ Integrating the regeneration phases being delivered on the High Path estate over the next 10- 15 years and ensuring the development enhances the local environment and Local Centre, guided by the Estates Local Plan; this includes the proposed public park at High Path;*
- k. ~~Supporting~~ Promoting an appropriate development at South Wimbledon station (Site Allocation Wi8) which respects and enhances the Grade II listed ~~building~~ heritage asset and other local heritage assets within the area, improves the station facilities and*

delivers a range of benefits including a public space, cycle parking and secondary pedestrian entrance to the underground station’.

Issue (ii): Does the plan aim to achieve healthy places which enable and support healthy lifestyles in a justified and effective way?

Questions:

1. How has the strategic direction outlined in Policy HW10.1 informed the Plan’s spatial strategy, and its detailed policies on neighbourhoods, green and blue infrastructure, design, transport, public realm, and other relevant issues?

The strategic direction provided in Policy HW10.1 whilst welcome is very general and we believe some amendments are required to ensure the Plan’s neighbourhood policies effectively promote health and wellbeing.

We strongly support the Council’s commitment to promote more active and healthier lifestyles and to tackle the causes of ill health and health inequalities in Merton. However, we believe the Plan should reflect more clearly the importance of improving access to sport and recreational facilities and the refurbishment of existing facilities and would strongly advocate the reinstatement of Policy O8.5 which was included in the Stage 2a Draft Local Plan.

We were disappointed to see the omission of this Policy and the commitment to helping residents lead healthy and active lifestyles and improving mental wellbeing through sport and recreation. The policy stated that the Council will encourage opportunities for sport, recreation and play and safeguard existing sport and recreation facilities and support proposals for the refurbishment of existing recreation facilities on sites designated as open space. BARA has been campaigning to bring the existing games area at Haydons Road Recreation Ground back into community sport and recreation use and are working with the Council to achieve this shared objective for the benefit of the South Wimbledon community.

The single line added to Policy IN 14.1f to the effect that the Council will work with partners to facilitate the delivery of sport, recreation and play facilities and to encourage the shared use of sites and spaces is inadequate and we strongly advocate the reinstatement of Policy O8.5 and reference to this included in Policy HW10.1.