

# THE BATTLES AREA RESIDENTS ASSOCIATION

## COMMENTS REGARDING THE DRAFT LOCAL PLAN FOR HIGH PATH ESTATE

I am writing these comments on the draft Local Plan for the High Path estate (published in February 2016) on behalf of the Committee of the Battles Area Residents Association and as residents of South Wimbledon. As a newly re-established Residents Association and only recently made aware of the Plan, we have been unable to formally present the draft Local Plan to local residents at a Residents Meeting or invite comments from them. We would hope to do so once the Council have reviewed feedback from the stage 2 consultation and when the Council offers residents a final chance to have their say on the plans for the estate.

Some of the Committee have attended the drop-in sessions regarding the draft Local Plan and viewed the estate. We consider the draft Local Plan is a very informative document. It is well thought out and the vision, design principles, historical context and site analysis are well written and expressive.

The site specific policies are clear and informative and provide a range of ideas and some detail to implement the vision and design principles for the re-building and re-generation of the estate.

We have some specific comments to be included in the feedback in respect of the Stage 2 consultation.

### The whole estate

- The overall density should be planned taking account of the pressure on local services – schools, doctors, health visitors, local transport etc

### Re Merton High Street

- We agree that the buildings fronting the High Street should be restricted to 4 storeys (with potential for a 5<sup>th</sup> storey setback). This height will mirror the height of the existing buildings on the opposite side of the High Street
- The mature group of plane trees to the east of Pincott Road should be retained and the one plane tree to the west. There are other smaller trees mainly maples and a few cherry trees which should be retained if possible, but they should not hinder the approval of future planning applications relevant to re-developing the frontage of the High Street which might require their removal. Similar trees could be planted in suitable alternative locations and this made a condition of the planning permission.
- The building line behind the line of plane trees could be brought forward by a few metres if required to make better use of *some of* the open space

next to the trees. However the building line must be behind the existing canopy and allow for some spread of the canopy in the future.

- The existing buildings or new buildings could be a mix of residential and retail to re-generate this stretch of the High Street. It is suggested retail units could be concentrated to the west of Pincott road up to South Wimbledon tube station. Some of these should be larger units to encourage well known retailers and help upgrade the High Street to become an attractive local shopping area for local residents.
- Then the new community centre (see below) could be located to the east of Pincott Road.
- Here the existing building line could be retained and a wide pavement located between the buildings (the community centre/small commercial offices/residential) and the green space under the plane trees. On either side of the wide pavement there could be seating areas or benches.
- There should be landscaping of the green space underneath the plane trees to make it more attractive. It is suggested a combination of large flowerbeds planted with shrubs, and a few raised beds with brick walls planted with either shrubs or flowering plants (depending on the managed maintenance regime in place after re-building the estate).

#### Re Morden Road

- The proposed re-development of Morden Road as a wide, straight boulevard with building frontages of an appropriate scale for a wide long street is welcomed.
- However, we consider the new block of flats and commercial space on the junction with Milner Road at a height of 8 storeys with a 9<sup>th</sup> floor setback is too high and this height should be an exception. In general, the height of new buildings should be restricted to 6 or 7 storeys with only a few of 7 storeys with an 8<sup>th</sup> floor setback. An advantage of restricting the height to 6 to 8 storeys is that this height would then be more in keeping with the heights of buildings behind in the rest of the High Path estate. We have suggested that the height of buildings in the rest of the High Path estate should be restricted in general to 4 to 5 storeys (see below).

#### Across the site

- It is appreciated that the aim of re-development is to create a new well designed high quality neighbourhood and at the same time to provide more homes and affordable homes available to buy or rent in the borough of Merton.
- However, we consider the height of new buildings in the rest of the estates should be restricted in general to 4 or 5 storeys. This opinion is based on viewing existing heights across the estate, in particular the 1950's blocks of flats built on the west side of the estate in the vicinity of Rowland Way and Hayward Close. Blocks such as these are the maximum acceptable height to maintain a sense of individual identity within a small community of residents rather than a faceless identity within a massive block of flats surrounded by other massive blocks.
- There was a display board at the drop-in sessions of the possible consistent design, form and character of buildings within the estate in the New London Vernacular style. This style is welcomed. However, perhaps

there should be more detail and explanatory photographs of this style of building included in the Local Plan.

- There should be a variety of buildings not just larger blocks of flats – some terraced houses or townhouses, and small blocks of flats or maisonettes. Some of these buildings could have small front gardens.
- We would suggest that not all buildings should have flat roofs. There could be some pitched roofs to add some variety.
- The New London Vernacular style encourages amenity space for each flat and it is suggested there should be a variety of styles of balconies, and some should be large balconies to give a sense of space to the buildings.
- There could also be walkways between some buildings with grass verges or planted areas.
- The colour of external material for the new buildings is important. It is suggested a yellow London multi-stock type brick would be more suitable rather than a red. There could be different yellow type multi-stock brick from different manufacturers, not just one type of yellow multi-stock brick. Yellow would bring both some bright colour to the estate as well as a softness. Yellow bricks would be in keeping with the frontage of the buildings in Merton High Street and the residential area of traditional terraced houses to the north of the estate known as The Battles. At present, there are low rise blocks of flats along Nelson Grove Road (built in the 1960's and recently), many of which are built in an attractive yellow multi-stock brick. So saying, the colour of bricks does not have to imitate the Victorian and Edwardian houses nearby, the estate should have its own identity.
- The external materials could also include natural stone.

#### Community shops

- At present there is only one convenience shop within the High Path estate – a Loco store situated in Pincott Road and not far from Merton High Street. It is noted that the Council supports the replacement of this convenience store.

#### Public recreation and open space

- It is agreed within the estate little of the land is actually covered by buildings. On re-building, it is proposed the housing density will substantially increase but the draft Local Plan makes it clear development proposals must provide public open space and suitably designed play spaces for all age groups. This is very important.
- We consider given the size of the estate, and easy access to large recreational areas such as Haydons Recreation Ground, Abbey Recreation Ground and the nearby Nelson Gardens, the Local Plan should prescribe a number of open spaces (whether medium or small spaces) rather than one large area (even if this is designed to be multi-functional). Then these open spaces would be easily accessible by all residents of the estate particularly families, teenagers and children, and elderly people.
- There are already some open spaces such as the green play area with mature trees in Priory Close which should be retained if possible and two sports courts which could be retained or re-located.

- Medium or small open spaces should be sensitively planted with native species to provide a leafy environment and encourage wildlife, some could include small play-areas for younger children. There are good examples of small open spaces interspersed with the terraced housing to the south of the Poets area and east of Haydons Road eg on either side of Norman Road there are two areas: a large green space situated between the houses and a smaller green space leading from Norman Road to Grove Road. There is also a green space off Deburgh Road.
- Another idea taken from this area is a planted width restriction.

#### A Community Centre

- The draft Local Plan does not prescribe a community centre. However, we understand from our local Councillors that this would be encouraged. It is suggested a community centre could be located on Merton High Street with perhaps a sports court as well (replacing the unattractive sports court in Stane Close). An advantage could be residents of the residential areas to the north, north west and west would also be able to use the facilities of the community centre, and renting out rooms in the community centre to as many groups as possible would help with running costs.

#### Parking

- As per the draft Local Plan as many on-street parking spaces as possible should be provided, but there could also be underground car parking. Parking bays should be provided for visitors, tradesmen and health workers/carers.

#### In conclusion

- New retail units in Merton High Street to the west of Pincott Road
- A community centre with its entrance from Merton High Street to the east of Pincott Road.
- The general building height across the site should be 4-5 storeys with some variations.
- Buildings fronting Merton High Street to be restricted to 4 storeys (with potential for a 5<sup>th</sup> storey setback)
- Buildings fronting Morden Road should be 6-7 storeys (with a few buildings having potential for an 8<sup>th</sup> storey setback). 9 storeys is far too high.
- An urban character based on the "new London Vernacular" of terraced streets, front doors to streets, use of brick and good design and access to quality amenity space. The final Local Plan should contain more details regarding the 'design, form, and character' of buildings built in the London Vernacular style.
- The predominant brick should be a yellow multi-stock brick – in different shades and textures in sympathy with buildings in the local area.
- One or two convenience stores within the estate.
- Medium or small open spaces dispersed throughout the estate, some of leafy quality, some with children's play areas. A sports court located within the estate, and possibly one attached to the community centre.
- Protect existing mature trees where possible. Plant new native trees.
- On-street parking and some underground car parks.

- Cycle docking stations throughout the estate and within blocks of flats.

We hope these comments are helpful.

Yours sincerely  
Hilary Morris, Secretary

On behalf of Robert Giles, Chair  
Philomena Kennedy, Vice-Chair  
Carla Dresseno, Treasurer  
Hilary Morris, Secretary  
Bert Kennedy, Jon Batts, Wendy Blanks, Marie Mulligan, Gemma Sherwin –  
Committee Members

Of the Battles Area Residents Association, Wimbledon SW19