

## **Borough Plan Advisory Committee**

**7<sup>th</sup> October 2020**

Wards: Abbey, Dundonald, Hillside, Trinity

### **Adoption of the Future Wimbledon Supplementary Planning Document (SPD)**

Lead officer: Chris Lee, Director for Environment & Regeneration

Lead member: Martin Whelton, Member for Regeneration, Housing & Transport

Contact officer: Paul McGarry, Head of Future Merton

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#### **Recommendations:**

That the Borough Plan Advisory Committee considers the report and advises that Cabinet:

- A. agrees the Consultation Report (Appendix B), including comments, responses and where applicable, amendments to the SPD.
- B. notes the Council has undertaken a screening exercise with relevant statutory bodies to confirm that a Strategic Environmental Assessment is not required to support the SPD.
- C. notes that whilst the Council's constitution permits Cabinet to agree the Adoption of SPDs; in recognition of the cross-party political representation in Wimbledon wards, the decision will be presented to Council.
- D. That Cabinet recommend to Council;
  - i. Adoption of the Future Wimbledon Supplementary Planning Document (Appendix A) in accordance with the Town & Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012.
  - ii. Delegate to the Director of Environment & Regeneration, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Housing & Transport, the making of minor factual, editorial and image changes to the SPD prior to publication.

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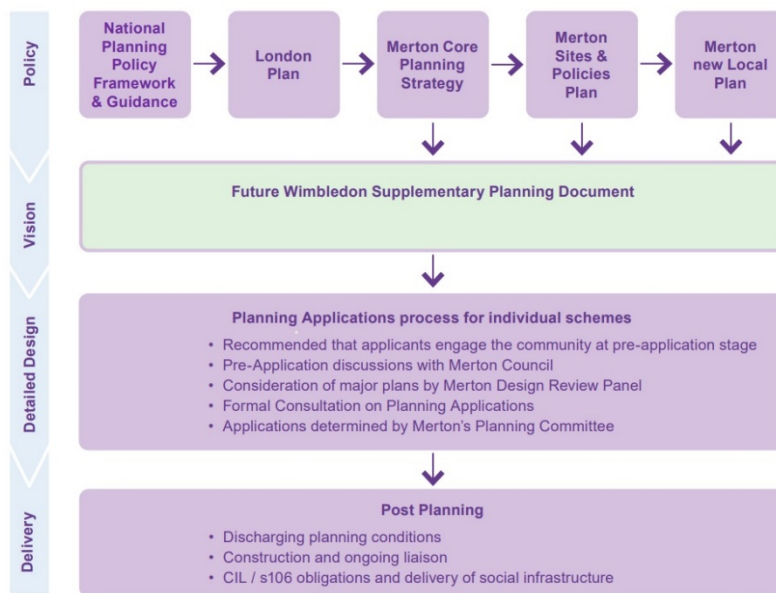
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#### **2 PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

- 2.1. In recent years, Wimbledon has seen a boom in planning applications for office, hotel and residential development as well as general improvements to existing buildings. Wimbledon is a successful town centre with a strong business community and employment sector as well as a loyal local catchment of residents who support the town and enjoy the facilities Wimbledon town centre has to offer.
- 2.2. The Future Wimbledon Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) provides the opportunity to create and implement a more structured plan for the town

centre going forward; one that is place-based and responds to Wimbledon's characteristics whilst promoting growth and investment.

- 2.3. The SPD supplements Merton's existing Local Plan policies to provide guidance, specific to Wimbledon town centre, for the design of development and public spaces and to attract investment. This report is seeking the adoption of the Future Wimbledon SPD as part of Merton's Local Plan.



- 2.4. During the Coronavirus pandemic we have all experienced changes to our daily lives and seen the impact on our local neighbourhoods and town centres.
- 2.5. Wimbledon has a symbiotic relationship between being a commercial town centre and a much loved town centre for residents. Pre Covid-19, the town centre had a high footfall mid-week thanks to the office base and transport connectivity. This high footfall sustained shops, restaurants and leisure facilities enjoyed by workers, residents and visitors.
- 2.6. During lockdown, we have seen what a rapid decline in the high street looks like and what the impact would be on Wimbledon without a strong employment sector. This is not a sustainable future for any town centre.
- 2.7. Whilst the Future Wimbledon SPD provides guidance for planning applications, it illustrates a long-term vision for Wimbledon's built environment into the 2040s. The vision is focussed on the qualities of place, good public realm, better and co-ordinated design and supports a more flexible mix of town centre uses.
- 2.8. When the SPD was originally drafted, it was a plan for managing growth. The context in which this guidance now sits has shifted dramatically. In the short to medium term, it will guide the recovery of Wimbledon town centre with an emphasis on quality and the experience of the place; leading to longer term growth and transformation.

### 3 DETAILS

3.1. **Future Wimbledon**

3.2. The council understands that good growth isn't solely established by planning policies. We need to be clear on the nature of the town centre; the uses that contribute towards a vibrant and successful commercial offer; how this integrates with the existing residential communities and how the quality of design – public realm and architectural design lie at the heart of successful places and underpin good growth.

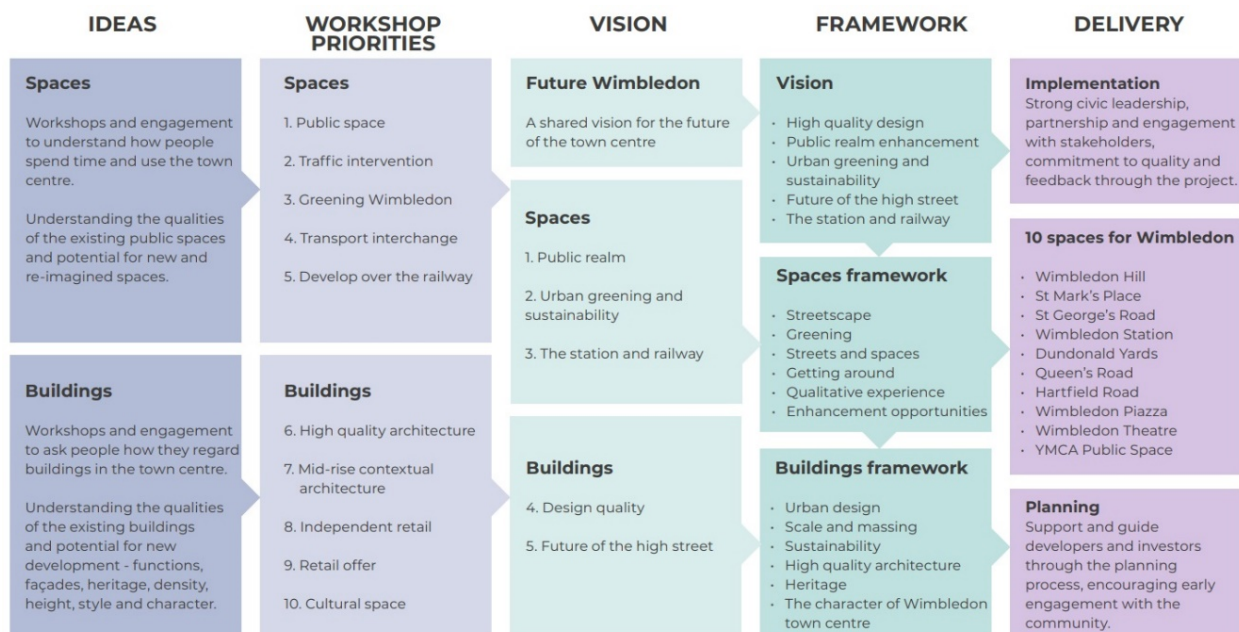
3.3. With an international renown thanks to the Wimbledon Tennis Championships, SW19 is a sought-after location and an increasingly popular place for people to live and for businesses to locate and invest. Wimbledon has the strongest global brand and greatest public transport connectivity in the south west London region.

3.4. The Future Wimbledon Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) has been prepared to create a long-term vision for the future of development in Wimbledon town centre.

3.5. Creating good places isn't just about the buildings and how they look, it's the streets and spaces between that matter; the human scale experience at street level promotes life, vitality and interest that give character to a place.

3.6. The intention of the SPD is to give further clarity and guidance our existing planning polices, to seek high quality development and to give developers the certainty they require of the planning process and to sustain investment in the borough.

3.7. The Future Wimbledon SPD was created through a process of workshop engagement and refining the priorities to form a vision and framework for both buildings and public spaces.



3.8. The Council's priorities for the development of Wimbledon town centre are set out in greater detail in Appendix A to this report.

3.9. In summary, our 5 key priorities are;

### **Design Quality**

- 3.10. Underpinning good growth with architecture that enhances character and uses materials that responds to the local context.

### **Public Realm**

- 3.11. Creation of spaces to dwell, socialise and host events to bring life to the public realm

### **Urban Greening and Sustainability**

- 3.12. The redevelopment of sites provides opportunities for more sustainable design. More planting and biodiversity in developments and on the public realm.

### **The Future of the High Street**

- 3.13. Support a greater flexibility of uses, pop-ups and meanwhile uses to support emerging businesses and add vitality to the town centre.

### **The Station and Railway**

- 3.14. Continue to work with Crossrail 2 and Network Rail to ensure that plans for Wimbledon Station integrate well with the urban fabric and provide long term solutions to traffic flow, passenger experience and contribute to the creation of new public space.

### **3.15. Coronavirus recovery**

- 3.16. Since the close of the Future Wimbledon Consultation on 6th March 2020 the Covid-19 pandemic has accelerated change in our town centre centres and high streets. In particular the shift to online shopping, dining delivery options and sustainable travel (walking and cycling).

- 3.17. Outer London town centres are faring better than central London as more people are working from home and utilising more local amenities.

- 3.18. The focus of the recovery led by central government is “Building back better”, the priorities of which include:

- creating mixed use, sustainable communities
- capturing active travel opportunities
- revitalising town centre by creating flexible town centre buildings and making the most of outdoor space opportunities
- improving air quality and soundscapes for better health and wellbeing

- 3.19. Research from Savills found that the majority of landlords have been considering re-purposing the high street following the demise of retail and casual dining in recent years, but Covid-19 has accelerated the change.

- 3.20. The uses being considered and delivered include the intensification and increases in pop-up and independent food and beverage, leisure, residential, community and business space. The key driver is to bring back footfall to town centres.

- 3.21. Town centres can provide accessible services and connected business hubs that minimise the need for travel.

- 3.22. The vision and priorities of the Future Wimbledon SPD are aligned with the “Build back better” proposals being suggested. In the SPD there is a greater focus on the experience of town centre by creating a mixed use neighbourhood for retail, office, community, culture, leisure and residential. The plan also recognises the importance of the public realm in supporting town centre uses, pop-up events and experiences.

#### **4 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS**

- 4.1. The alternative option to the recommendations in this report would be to not adopt the SPD. The original rationale for creating this guidance was to provide an overall plan to guide development and growth in Wimbledon over the next 20 years. This was in direct response to criticism that development in Wimbledon was piecemeal and uncoordinated.
- 4.2. Not adopting this SPD would mean that there is no detailed guidance for development in Wimbledon town centre. Planning applications would be determined on the basis of existing policy which is not considered to be sufficiently detailed or Wimbledon specific.
- 4.3. Not adopting the SPD diminishes the Council’s ability to drive up quality or provide certainty to developers seeking to invest in Wimbledon. This approach could also lead to an increase in planning appeals.

#### **5 CONSULTATION UNDERTAKEN OR PROPOSED**

- 5.1. Please refer to Appendix B: Future Wimbledon SPD Consultation Report (September 2020)

#### **6 TIMETABLE**

- 6.1. The SPD has undergone a lengthy process of engagement and refinement as set out in the consultation report (Appendix B)

The timetable for adopting the SPD as formal planning guidance is:

- 6.2. Borough Plan Advisory Committee 7<sup>th</sup> October 2020
- 6.3. Cabinet 12 October 2020
- 6.4. Council 18 November 2020

#### **7 FINANCIAL, RESOURCE AND PROPERTY IMPLICATIONS**

- 7.1. Production of the SPD, associated officer time and consultation undertaken was delivered through the Future Merton team’s Local Plan budget.
- 7.2. Officer time and resources required to advise planning applicants is anticipated to be more efficient due to the provision of better guidance. This will create a more efficient planning service through a clearer and more

effective pre-application service and planning application determination process.

- 7.3. The SPD will contribute indirect financial benefits to the Council by assisting the regeneration of Wimbledon town centre and increasing the local tax base. Design guidance also provides greater certainty to the local community and developers and will help mitigate costs associated with planning appeals.
- 7.4. The guidance adds detail to the site allocations contained in Merton's Local Plan. Merton Council's own property assets in Wimbledon will benefit from this guidance, adding more certainty to the type and quantum of development that could be achieved should the Council choose to dispose or develop assets in future.

## **8 LEGAL AND STATUTORY IMPLICATIONS**

- 8.1. Appendix B to this report summarises the extensive consultation undertaken in the production of the SPD. Officers are satisfied that the consultation undertaken is in accordance with the requirements for public participation and adoption of the SPD as set out in the Town & Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012

## **9 HUMAN RIGHTS, EQUALITIES AND COMMUNITY COHESION IMPLICATIONS**

- 9.1. An Equality Analysis of the SPD has been prepared and is available online at [www.merton.gov.uk/futurewimbledon](http://www.merton.gov.uk/futurewimbledon)
- 9.2. The Equality Analysis has not identified any potential for discrimination or negative impact on equalities. The analysis highlights a positive impact in socio-economic status as the SPD supports growth in the local economy and enhances employment opportunities for the borough.

## **10 CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS**

- 10.1. There are no crime and disorder impacts arising from the recommendations in this report. Any changes to buildings or the public realm will be assessed for Secure by Design benefits at the time of planning applications or the delivery of public realm enhancements.

## **11 RISK MANAGEMENT AND HEALTH AND SAFETY IMPLICATIONS**

- 11.1. There are no risk management or health and safety implications for this report.

## **12 APPENDICES – THE FOLLOWING DOCUMENTS ARE TO BE PUBLISHED WITH THIS REPORT AND FORM PART OF THE REPORT**

- A. Future Wimbledon Supplementary Planning Document 2020.

- B. Future Wimbledon Consultation Report 2020.

## **13 BACKGROUND PAPERS**

13.1. [www.merton.gov.uk/futureWimbledon](http://www.merton.gov.uk/futureWimbledon)

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