

WIMBLEDON COMMUNITY FORUM
29 JANUARY 2020

(7.15 pm - 9.15 pm)

PRESENT Councillors Councillor James Holmes (in the Chair),

1 WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS (Agenda Item 1)

The meeting was held at the Wimbledon Arts Space, and chaired by Councillor James Holmes. More than 25 residents attended, as well as 11 other Merton Councillors. The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting, introducing the councillors present at the meeting.

2 WIMBLEDON TOWN CENTRE MASTERPLAN (Agenda Item 2)

Paul McGarry, Head of Future Merton, gave a presentation on the final draft of the Future Wimbledon Supplementary Planning Document. The presentation slides are below. Paul said that the consultation document is available on the [Council website](#); the consultation is open until 6 March. As with previous versions, this plan covers commercial centre, not residential area and sets out a common vision for the town centre in response to the piecemeal development. The plan will supplement existing planning policies, sits under London Plan and Local Plan. The plan also sets out how the Council could use Community Infrastructure Levy to develop public space.

The process to date has included workshops and prior consultation. In response to the last consultation, this plan reduces the number of themes from ten to five; emphasises heritage aspects; reduced building heights; broken the plan into five year phases; improved design quality standards, and identified ten public spaces to improve.

The plan also considers the following issues:

- A need to redefine streets to create more space for pedestrians and cyclists
- The new local plan will include stronger emphasis on sustainability
- There is a need to be more flexible and adaptable buildings
- How Crossrail 2 will link into wider plans, more infrastructure (bridges) and a town square in front of the station. However, Paul said the Council will want to use document to lobby Network Rail to invest in the station with new walkways linking platforms regardless of the Crossrail development.

Paul also showed a [fly through video](#), which is available on the website. Paul asked that responses to the consultation be submitted via Council website. Once the

responses have been reviewed, a final version will be put to councillors at full Council in April/May.

Residents raised a number of points and asked questions, these are set out below along with Paul's response.

Point raised	Response
The focus is on business space instead of the local community	Wimbledon is a commercial centre and the focus is on those areas. Not looking to change heritage buildings, instead looking for growth in buildings that are not liked by the community.
Building heights are four times the current levels and this ignores feedback from previous consultations; what are the metre limits on heights? Has the micro climate impact of tall buildings been considered	Building heights are shown in relation to neighbours and can vary by usage, commercial is higher than residential. Height map will set out the case applicants will now have to make. The Council is not proposing high buildings, but there is growth in London and in Wimbledon and it creates more jobs and investment.
No demand for office space currently	There is high levels of occupancy in the town centre currently
what work has been done to engage younger audiences	Have previously engaged with local schools and other youth groups but would love to hear more from young people
Is there enough time to properly consider comments on the plan?	This is the final draft plan, based on feedback from previous feedback so there is not the detail to work through that there was before.
Previous strong support for improving public spaces and amenities and these are not reflected in the plans. More effort should have been put into creating a public space in the town centre.	There was a strong desire for a town square. This is not possible to deliver without huge change, so incremental change is necessary, starting with theatre and St Marks Place.
Neighbourhood planning group launched last Saturday, aim to produce a Neighbourhood Plan for Wimbledon.	Neighbourhood plan's place in policy setting is covered in document. Video is an illustration, detailed design will follow as and when resources are available.

Plan does not address traffic and will stop other ideas to redirect traffic. How will this link in borough wide cycle network?	Presentation does not cover all the detail, more detail on the website including additional bridges that will reduce pressure on Wimbledon Bridge Road. Will consult on traffic remodelling or new infrastructure but the SPD does not cover the detailed plans for the roads.
The plan could set out quality design thresholds	There is clear guidance in plan, to carry on with existing quality of white stone or red brick.
Planning application for Frances Grove (planning reference number 19/P3814) is for poor quality development.	Unable to comment on live planning applications.
Heritage assets are supposed to be prioritised, but the Bank building planning permission does not keep that asset.	That building has been locally listed so the application would have been reviewed by conservation officer and considered by Planning Applications Committee
Transparency is concern with pre planning advice not shared; and Merton not publishing comments on planning applications on their website.	Merton cannot stop planning applications from being submitted but does encourage developers to consult pre-application. That way residents can influence applications before they are submitted.

3 OPEN FORUM (Agenda Item 3)

[Epsom and St Helier Hospital consultation](#) is currently taking place on creating a new single acute facility, down from two, with the preferred option to have this new facility at Sutton Hospital. This would mean longer journey times, and fewer beds locally. [The Keep Our St Helier Hospital](#) group is asking residents to challenge the plans and to sign their petition.

Merton Council's [Overview and Scrutiny Commission](#) is asking residents to suggest ideas for future reviews.

A resident asked if it was accurate that Merton Council had been given a grant for landscaping on Wimbledon Hill that had been unspent for three years. Paul McGarry explained that Merton Council had given a grant to Willmore End Residents Association (WERA) from [Community Infrastructure Levy](#) (CIL) funds but there was an issue around procurement that has delayed the work. CIL is a levy on

development that can pay for infrastructure. Merton has local CIL funding and a Neighbourhood fund.

Local action on climate change is vital so should Merton Council be giving guidance to families and households? Paul explained that there is a [Climate Emergency Working Group](#), that will be looking to issue a draft action plan in March.

A resident asked what the latest on the concert hall plan is. Paul said that the Wimbledon Concert Hall Trust is trying to get together a design and business plan. They are in conversation with Merton Council about using the car park behind Morrison's.

A resident stated that South Gas Network traffic works in South Wimbledon is causing chaos. Councillor Stephen Alambritis has asked officers to respond to queries and are looking at mitigations but these works are essential.

A resident said that the Wimbledon Chase planning application would be a blight.

4 LOCAL GOVERNMENT BOUNDARY COMMISSION PROPOSALS (Agenda Item 4)

Kris Witherington gave a brief presentation, attached to this report, on the proposed changes to Merton's electoral wards from the independent Local Government Boundary Commission for England. The main changes include abolishing Dundonald ward, introducing a new Wandle ward and three wards (Hillside, Wandle and Merton Park) becoming two member wards. The [consultation](#) on these proposals is open until 2 March 2020 and residents are encouraged to have their say.

UPDATE: the consultation has been extended until 16 March 2020

5 LONDON ASSEMBLY UPDATE (Agenda Item 5)

Leonie Cooper, Assembly Member for Merton and Wandsworth, explained that the role of the London Assembly is to scrutinise the Mayor of London and hold the Mayor to account. The Assembly covers Transport for London, Metropolitan Police, London Fire Brigade, and a number of development companies. They also review the Mayoral budget of £18bn, although London is now the only area that no longer gets grant for highways from central Government.

The Mayor declared a climate Emergency in 2018, so the Assembly is now holding to Mayor to account over his Action Plans. Leonie was the Chair of the Environment Committee 2016-18, and is now chair of Economy Committee. The committee will be reviewing carbon economy, working on the state of high street – how to keep alive,

balance of big and small stores, business rates. Evidence provided to the committee included Helen Clarke Bell from Love Wimbledon as an expert witness.

The London Plan is now being finalised following consultation and examination in public. There is now a whole section on green infrastructure, good growth, housing targets, plus links to transport and environment strategies.

Leonie has spoken with the Deputy Mayor, Sophie Linden, about the closure of police stations and can confirm there is no plan to close Wimbledon police station. There will be a review of the estate needs across the South West London Command Unit.

A resident asked if in the new London Plan, Wimbledon is designated as a major urban area. Leonie said that the Mayor has made some adjustments following Inspectorate report including rejecting Green Belt and Fracking plans and it has now gone to Secretary State for review and approval. She will check with Deputy Mayor on Wimbledon's status.

FOLLOWING THE MEETING: Wimbledon was designated as a Major Town Centre in the draft London Plan and an Opportunity Area.

A question was asked about Travelcard price increases. Leonie said that the Mayor's manifesto only referred to TfL fare freeze, and did not cover train fares.

A resident asked if Wimbledon police station definitely be kept open. Leonie said that with a promised increase in police (1369 in London initially) the Police will need additional space. We do not know yet how many officers will come to South West London BCU so they will need to review estate needs.

A resident said that the Mayor was keen on improving air quality yet has approved Silvertown Tunnel; that the London Plan targets for housing will have negative impact on local communities and he puts too much pressure on councils to approve development that will be negative for well-being. Leonie said that the independent Inspectorate thought plan targets and mix was not appropriate so recommended some reductions. London is not a homogenous city, and the Mayors team, which looks at developments, is starting to challenge bad design more often. This is a difficult task but it is good to have a strategic authority having an overview.

Merton had missed out on mini-Holland money, and did not bid for Liveable Neighbourhood so is there a reason why cycling infrastructure is not being invested in. Leonie said she was not aware of any reason why future a bid would not be successful.

There is huge frustration with delays on the District Line caused by signals. Leonie said that the line is being upgraded but benefits not being felt yet.

A resident asked if it would be possible to review the effect of the Public Transport Accessibility Level rating on development. Leonie said this is unlikely to be reviewed and has been in use for a long time. Crossrail 2 is the solution to increasing capacity for public transport in Wimbledon.

A resident asked about affordable housing quotas. The Mayor sets targets for social housing but has to take into account need to raise funds to pay for development.

6 DATE OF NEXT MEETING (Agenda Item 6)

Councillor Holmes thanked everyone for attending and closed the meeting.

The next meeting will be on Thursday 26 March 2020, 7.15pm in Wimbledon Arts Space