

Future Merton

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protecting our amenities... enhancing our quality of life

12 April 2019

Dear Sir,

Third Local Implementation Plan: Transport Plan

The Wimbledon Society wishes to take the opportunity to comment on the Local Implementation Plan for transport (LIP) provided by Merton Council's consultation period.

As our area of interest covers the old parish of Wimbledon (including the centres of Wimbledon, the village, South Wimbledon, Wimbledon Park and Raynes Park) our comments focus on those areas. However, many of our comments have, we hope, a wider applicability across the borough.

Introduction

The foreword to the document sets out the main challenges facing the area for transport in the coming years:

- Improving the safety and air quality of our streets
- Increasing the proportion of our journeys completed primarily with active travel
- Providing the infrastructure required to provide the transport as more homes and jobs are created in our area.

As a Society, we recognise these challenges and our comments are intended to assist in meeting them.

In Wimbledon, we also note that the most important transport initiative – Crossrail 2 – is uncertain in terms of whether and when it will happen. Obviously, this uncertainty is difficult to handle in a three-year rolling plan. The plan is based on the assumption that it will happen – alternatives are not explored. For the purposes of this plan we agree this is the only viable approach.

Our Comments

The document offers a number of concrete proposals that we would like to support:

- Increasing electric car charging points
- Step free access to Raynes Park and Motspur Park Stations
- Completion of the Wandle trail 'missing link' to avoid the detour in Earlsfield
- A new cycle quietway linking the Wandle trail to Wimbledon via South Park Road.

We urge the council to progress these initiatives and note that some have been proposed for some time.

The steps at the Wimbledon end of the rail-side path from Wimbledon to Raynes Park make it difficult for cyclists and many pedestrians and significantly reduce its usefulness. Plans should include eliminating the need for these steps by, say, a new ramp.

We also appreciate the plan to introduce a dockless cycle hire scheme. We also agree that a borough wide scheme and one that includes ebikes is preferable. However, as the plan notes, this type of scheme may be expensive and require financial incentives to get it underway. If support is required and the council cannot provide or find it, there is a choice – reduce the scheme or go without. Going without is, in our view, the wrong answer. Of course, we would expect advertising and sponsorship to help offset much of the cost.

There is little in these proposals to encourage pedestrian access to Wimbledon. We would encourage the increase in pedestrian only areas. As set out in our Vision 2040 response to the Wimbledon Masterplan, we would like to see The Broadway pedestrianised in stages from Hartfield Road to the theatre. This would enhance the town centre, improve air quality and encourage active transport. Similar plans would improve other town centres in the borough.

Other pedestrian areas should also be protected and increased. For example, improving the character of St. Marks Place and the Piazza and Victoria Crescent. We would also expect to see new developments to include additional pedestrian only space. For example, we were encouraged to see a new pedestrian walkway from the Piazza to the proposed new concert hall included in the Town Centre Masterplan. Even if a new concert hall is not the destination, a new pedestrian space there is highly desirable.

Proposals for new and enhanced pedestrian areas should be included in these plans. The plans should also set out how they will be funded from council and other sources.

More also needs to be done to encourage cycling in our area. We note that new cycle parking is not included in the policies or visible funding. Para 3.5 of the LIP states: *On-street cycle parking provision and usage has expanded in recent years, however scope to further increase provision can be challenging due to competing uses for kerb-side and footway space.* However, if we are to encourage cycling, cycles must be stored close to destinations. We believe that some further increase in cycle parking is required in the area and that

ensuring its security is essential. Cycle hangers are more compact and it may be able to use them to generate advertising revenue.

We are aware of discussions to enhance the largely pedestrian area of St. Mark's Square. Cycle parking could be provided there instead of some of the fast food outlets. It is hard to see how increasing the level of fast food provision will advance healthy streets and active travel, rather it will increase our public health problems associated with diet. It might also improve the appearance of the area by eliminating some of the informal cycle parking there.

We agree with the plan that the low speed limits should be extended. As well as enforcement and traffic calming measures, 'natural' enforcement such as pedestrian crossings and lights, or traffic lights phased to ensure that drivers speeding between lights will be faced with a red light should be included.

As part of parking policy, parades of shops should be provided with parking areas that are free for a short period, say 30 minutes, to protect their trades. Many of our local parades will need this type of parking if they are to thrive.

Parking revenues should be ringfenced for improvements to our transport infrastructure to encourage active travel. We ask for this to be transparently done, with publication of how this revenue is spent.

For completeness, the LIP should make it clear which sites need to be earmarked to achieve the transport plan. For example:

- For completion of CR2
- For elimination of level crossings at Burlington Road and Motspur Park
- For construction of new bridges over the railway as mooted in the CR2 proposals
- For new pedestrianised areas.

In terms of usage of the public highway, we would also seek tighter controls over scaffolding and other facilities used in construction. These often significantly inconvenience pedestrians and detract from public use of our towns. These are roads for public use, and their use in construction should be considered reluctantly. Making footpaths inadequate or leaving scaffolding for a long time should be considered unacceptable.

We thank the council for the opportunity to be involved in this consultation and look forward to further discussions.

Yours sincerely

Chris Goodair
Chairman, Planning and Environment Committee

Please send all correspondence by email to chairmanpc@wimbledonsociety.org.uk