

Planning Division  
Environment & Regeneration  
London Borough of Merton  
Crown House  
MORDEN  
SM4 5DX



[- protecting our amenities... enhancing our quality of life

22 October 2021

For the attention of David Gardener, Case Officer

Dear Mr Gardener,

**21/P3163 - St George's House East, 5 St Georges Road SW19 4DR  
Demolition of existing building and re-development of site to provide a mixed-use, 12 storey building ((with additional basement level), of 25,891sqm gross internal floorspace, comprising retail and office (use class e), and additional plant accommodation at roof level.**

Having reviewed the application, the Wimbledon Society notes:

- The site is occupied by a 1980's building, having 9,400sqm, which consists of ground floor retail and 7 storeys of office space
- The proposal is for its total demolition, and replacement by a building having nearly 3 times the floor area of the existing at some 26,000 sqm. It is to provide retail at ground level but a huge 11 storeys of office space. This is 7 floors higher than Ely's, and 4 floors higher than the tallest part of the St George's House West building:
- It is welcome to see that it is proposed to be an all-electric building aiming to be net zero carbon by 2030 and that reference is made to the LETI Design guide
- The rather restricted and confined existing pedestrian route on the south-eastern side is shown widened with the unpleasant and anti-social recesses removed
- When the steps to the west are removed this will provide the potential for a wider cycle route into the Town centre.

However, the Society objects to the application on the following grounds:

- The height of the proposed building is excessive. This scale is what one expects in inner London, but local people have consistently said that 6 storeys should be the maximum. What is proposed is out of scale locally, and not in the character of Wimbledon:
- Since the 'work from home' concept has so quickly evolved things have changed, and we do not need more offices – we need more housing and a corresponding change in the thrust of the Council's plans.
- The demolition of a perfectly sound existing building cannot be said to be sustainable. The Council's Design Review Panel on 30/7/20 favoured renovation for that reason (page 45 of the DAS). The RIBA is on record saying that we now have to look for renovation more than wasteful redevelopment if we are to meet our Climate Change obligations and targets. The well-known and respected firm of Arups have said (in 2021) that they found that "50% of whole life carbon emissions of a building come from carbon emitted during demolition and construction"
- Accordingly this application is not considered to be a development that follows the Council's sustainability and Climate Change Policies: renovation and adaptation and modernisation of the existing substantial structure should instead be the adopted approach. It is entirely structurally feasible that the massive existing foundations, heavy floor slabs and their supporting columns are all left in place and are used as the skeleton upon which the new fabric and supporting services is built. An additional floor could be accommodated.
- The Red Line defining the site on the drawings is incorrect - it includes parts of the public highway, which is nothing to do with the site. Trees are shown as planted in the St Georges Road footway, but it is not in the application site.
- The heavy pedestrian movement on all 3 sides requires that all the footways and forecourt are formally publicly dedicated and protected.

- In order that the pedestrian and cycle paths to the east (which are considered to be currently antisocial) do not get replicated by a bland or blanked-off office wall, this elevation should have a run of small shops some 5m deep, facing directly onto the pedestrian way, matching the highly successful shops (only 4m deep) in Worple Road opposite Ely's. They would provide "eyes on the street" for safety, provide interest, and provide the type of small low-cost units for small firms. They are single aspect lockups, all access and service being through their front door. They work well.

Much has been said in the past about the Crossrail 2 proposals, especially those that would affect Wimbledon. The plans for this transport link have not yet been abandoned, although the effect of Covid on transport and the need for Crossrail 2 in particular has yet to be fully assessed.

Consequently, it is essential that the alignment of the eastern corner of the proposed building allows for the future construction of the new bridge over the tracks – this was central to the Crossrail 2 designs. The existing bridge will have to be rebuilt because the new track work lines under the bridge cannot be routed through the present forest of columns supporting it. The bridge is said in fact to be three bridges alongside each other.

We consider this application to be one that may strategically affect TfL planning, and therefore we are copying this letter to TfL.

We suggest that Merton Council does not approve this application in its current form and encourage the re-submission of a new plan by the applicant which incorporates our comments.

Yours sincerely

Chris Goodair  
Chair, Wimbledon Society Planning & Environment Committee

cc TfL at [Haveyoursay@tfl.gov.uk](mailto:Haveyoursay@tfl.gov.uk)

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