

Newsletter

Wimbledon Neighbourhood Planning Group

Issue 1: March 2020

From the Chair of the Wimbledon Neighbourhood Planning Group



Dear Neighbour,

On the 25th of January, the Inaugural General Meeting of the Wimbledon Planning Group took place. The Group's purpose is to establish a Neighbourhood Forum which will then prepare a Neighbourhood Plan for Wimbledon which giving Wimbledon residents and businesses a statutory voice in setting the planning policy in Wimbledon.

Our purpose is to promote and improve our area's social, economic and environmental wellbeing. At a time of change and climate emergency, we are determined to ensure that Wimbledon evolves as a balanced neighbourhood where residents love to be and businesses thrive, and to which visitors are attracted. Our aim is to guide future development towards creating a characterful, aesthetically pleasing neighbourhood that is fit and sustainable for generations to come.

In order to do this, we need your help. To gain acceptance as a Neighbourhood Forum we need to demonstrate that we have the support of the community so please register as a member. It is free to join, and it means you will have a say in the type of plan we create – you can register as a member here at www.wimbledon-npg.org.uk

Vincent Harris, Chair

chair@wimbledon-npg.org.uk

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What Neighbourhood Planning is

'If it needs a planning application then it can be influenced by a neighbourhood plan'

Neighbourhood planning gives communities direct power to develop a shared vision for their neighbourhood and shape the development and growth of their local area. They are able to choose where they want new homes, shops and offices to be built, have their say on what those new buildings should look like and what infrastructure should be provided. It will not be granting planning permission – just the policy on which applications are judged.

Neighbourhood planning provides a powerful set of tools for local people to influence developments.

The Neighbourhood Planning process was created by the Locality Act in 2011 enabling those areas – mainly urban ones which did not have Parish Councils - to establish Neighbourhood Forums which would then create Neighbourhood Plans. The whole process is a transparent and democratic one with the voters having the last word in a referendum.

Neighbourhood planning enables communities to play a much stronger role in shaping the areas in which they live and work and in supporting new development proposals. Decisions on planning applications will be made using both the local plan and the neighbourhood plan, and any other material considerations.

Neighbourhood planning provides the opportunity for communities to set out a positive vision for how they want their area to develop. Any plan which is approved will remain in force for 5 years. They can put in place planning policies that will help deliver that vision when the local authority considers planning applications.

While the plan is prepared by a Forum, it is developed in close consultation with the communities in the area. And it is the communities which have the final say in whether the plan is acceptable because it is put to a referendum.

Why Wimbledon needs a Neighbourhood Plan



Wimbledon is changing rapidly. It is under intense pressure for development, which will become even more intense if Crossrail2 goes ahead.

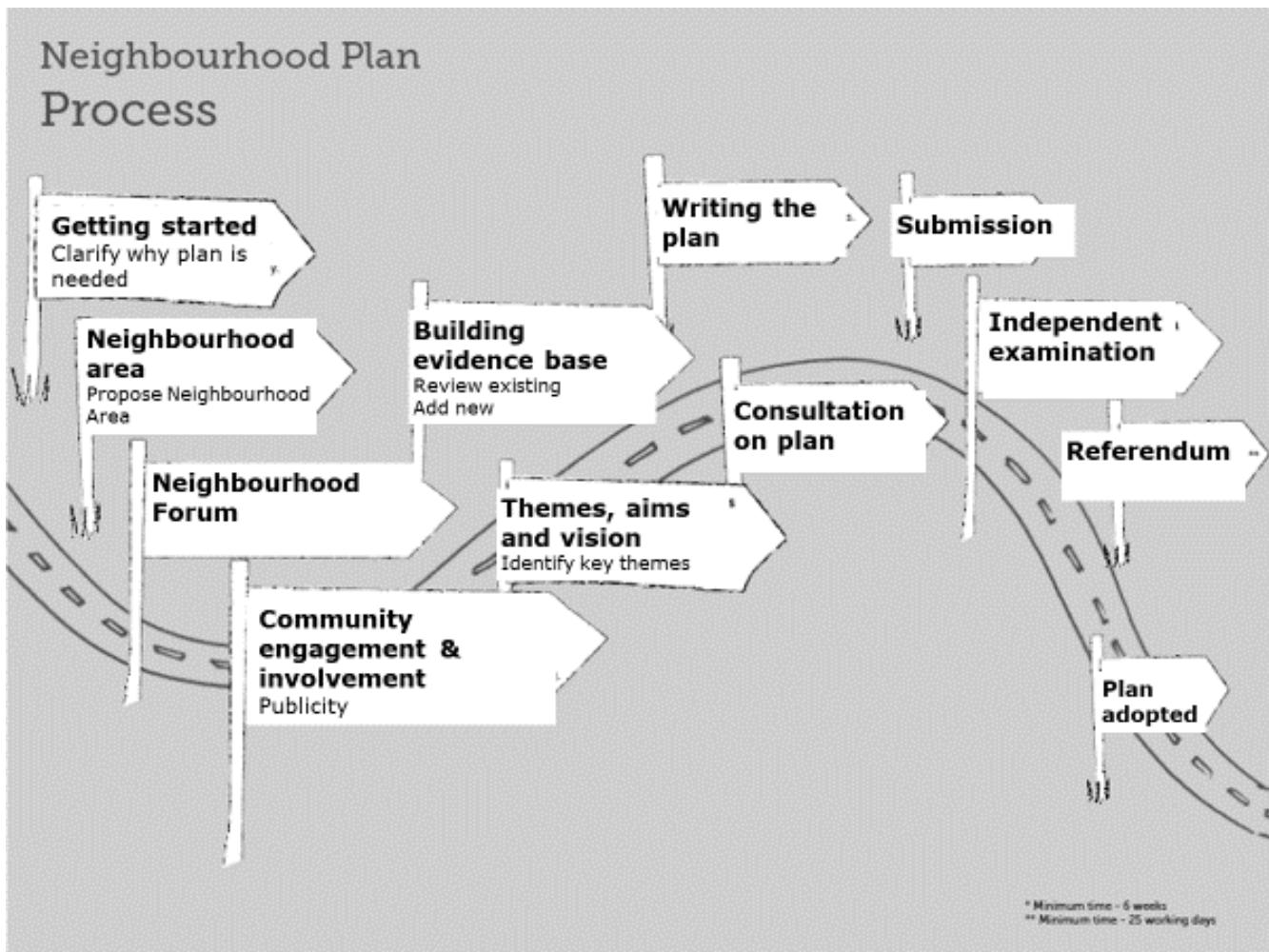
There are too many examples of poor-quality development in recent years in Wimbledon. The new power for communities to create neighbourhood plans gives us a chance to remedy this.

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Such a plan, prepared by the people of Wimbledon through a democratic process, will give statutory weight to our vision of a sustainable neighbourhood. In developing a Neighbourhood Plan we are not entirely free of constraints – the plan has to conform to national planning policies, the London Plan and strategic aspects of the Merton Local Plan. It then ranks with the Local Plan when planning applications (these are really applications for permission to develop) are considered by the Local Authority.

Especially in a world threatened by the urgent issue of climate change, working together to prepare a neighbourhood plan for Wimbledon is an opportunity we cannot afford to miss.

The Neighbourhood Planning Process



Given its resultant legal status, creating a Neighbourhood Forum and then a Neighbourhood Plan is a relatively long and often arduous process. We are currently at the second hurdle – defining a Neighbourhood Area - and are planning to be over the third hurdle – gaining recognition as a Neighbourhood Forum - by summer.

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Gaining approval as a Forum

Getting over the first hurdle involved putting together a group of committed volunteers who have established themselves as a Group and are now working hard to agree the area to be covered by the Future Plan.

The Group has given considerable thought to the important question ‘What is the Wimbledon Neighbourhood?’ The natural starting point was the old Wimbledon Town Hall, however, the neighbourhood is much more than just the town centre and our preliminary consultations led us to propose an area roughly covered by a circle centred on the old Wimbledon Town Hall and a mile in radius – from Wimbledon Chase to Wimbledon Park and the Wandle to the Common.

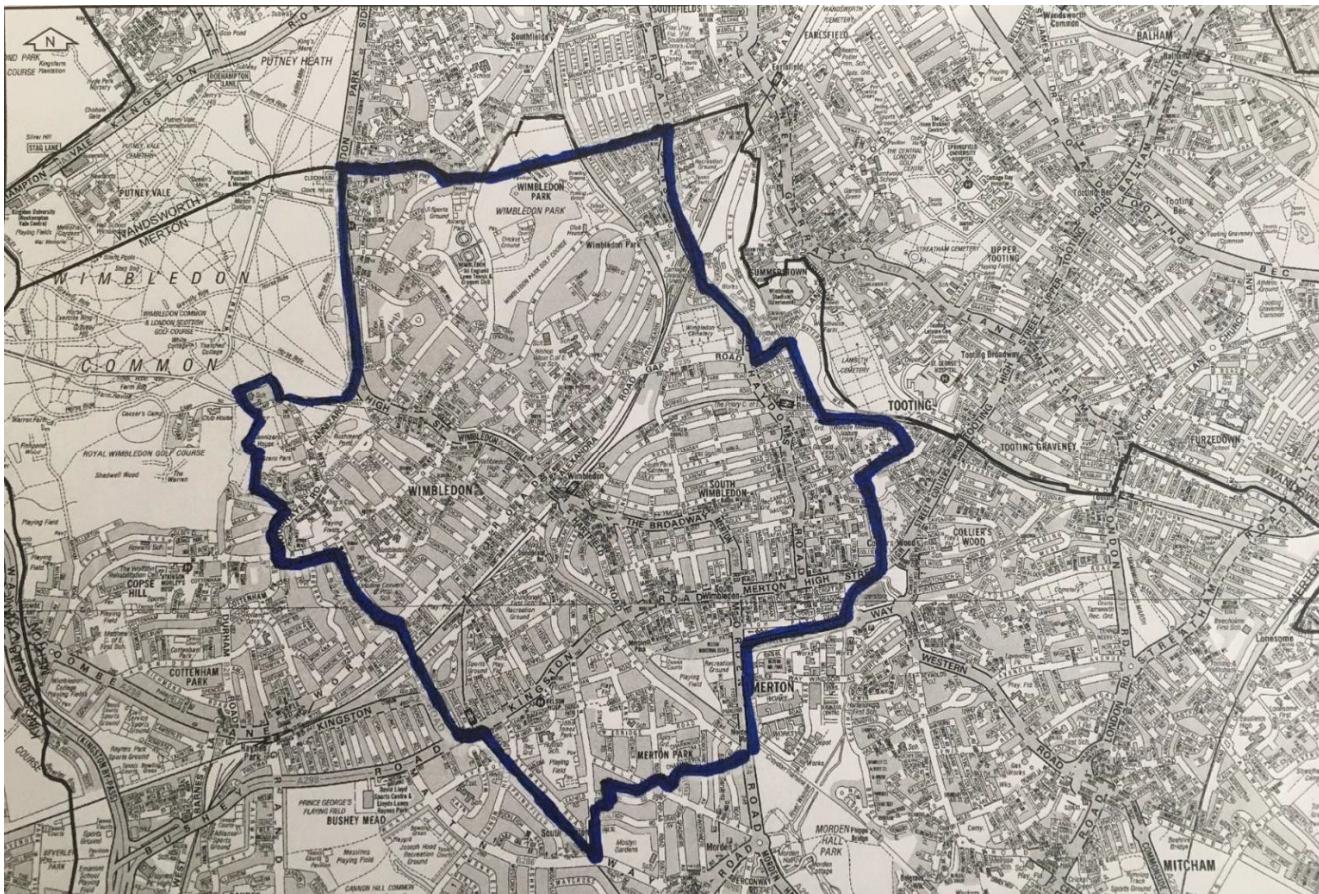
We are now engaged in a comprehensive consultation with local groups i.e. residents’ associations, Wimbledon businesses, schools, faith groups etc. to refine the border – the current map is illustrated below and we are aiming to complete this consultation by late Spring.

To date we have met with the following groups and associations: Raynes Park Association, Merton Park Residents, WURA (the Wimbledon Union of Residents Associations), Apostles Residents Association, Friends of Wimbledon Park, WEHRA, Wimbledon Park RA, the Battles RA, Friends of Wimbledon Town Centre, the Wandle Meadows area, Cannizaro Park, Kings School, Centre Court, individual local businesses, Kings School, Time And Leisure Magazine, Merton Council, various local councillors and Love Wimbledon. We will shortly be meeting Clarion and have a long list of contacts to work through in the coming weeks and months (health scares permitting).

To date, we have had a very positive response. If you are a local group, RA or business and would like to meet with us to discuss your planning issues, the relevance of the proposed Forum to you and whether you want to be in the area then please contact Jonathan Parker on secretary@wimbledon-npg.org

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The Proposed Area:



Once this is agreed, we can submit an application to Merton Council to be recognised as a Neighbourhood Forum. One of the key things we will have to demonstrate is local support across the defined area from businesses (and their employees) and residents alike – to this end we need as many people as possible to become members.

Preparing a Neighbourhood Plan



This is an extensive process requiring technical expertise and a significant financial investment. The government has established a fund specifically for this purpose and we will be applying for a grant. There is also the possibility of requesting technical assistance from the government and we will almost certainly make use of this to supplement the technical advice we have available to us locally.

The Plan will be developed after extensive and detailed consultation with all communities with an interest in the environmental, social and economic wellbeing of the area. This will include residents, businesses and workers in the area. Once finalised the Plan will be submitted to the local authority for approval.

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Given this, we do not yet know the precise form the Plan will take, we are being guided by creating something which is beneficial for Wimbledon as a whole and has, at its heart, a prosperous and sustainable future for everyone



The approval process will include a referendum, conducted by the local authority, seeking the approval of the community for the proposed Plan. If approved the Plan will have legal authority within the planning process for the area.

Meet the Steering Group

The Steering Group comprises eleven volunteer members. All live and/or work in Wimbledon.

Vincent Harris (Chair): My wife and I have lived in Wimbledon for 45 years, initially in Vineyard Hill Road and now in the Dundonald area. I studied physics at Imperial College but spent much of my life in industrial relations becoming chair of the European Chemical Employers Group. We like Wimbledon but there is much that can be done to improve it, and much that needs protecting. So I joined the Group in October last year and was flattered to be asked to chair it. Much progress has been made in the last 6 months and I look forward to leading the group to be a recognised Neighbourhood Forum in late spring/early summer.

Jonathan Parker (Secretary): I am a fine artist with thirty years' experience, striving for greater visual intelligence. I joined the neighbourhood planning group a year ago, gradually accepting the challenge of leading the group to where we are now. Uncertainty is a key element when starting a painting which has helped drive my current task; to define "the area."

Suzanne Grocott (Treasurer): I am a chartered accountant and have worked in investment banking for over 30 years. My husband and I have lived in Wimbledon since 2007. Our son (now 25) went to school here. I have been a local councillor on Merton Council between 2010-2018. During that time, I was the shadow cabinet member for Finance and Housing. I am interested in improving Wimbledon, both in reducing traffic movements and improving development.

Rob Cowan: I edit a journal about historic buildings and write about urban design.

Deborah Crosby: I have lived in Wimbledon for over 30 years and witnessed much change, not necessarily for the better.

With a background in devising consumer-centric strategies for global brands, I will help devise a plan for Wimbledon which truly reflects the needs and wants of local residents and businesses.

Tim Day: I am an architect and urban designer with offices in Twickenham. I have lived in Wimbledon since 1977.

Regina Denton: I have lived in Wimbledon for 40 years and we have brought up our family here. I would like to help to ensure that the next generation can bring up their children in a family friendly, sustainable environment.

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Lynne Gordon: I have lived in Wimbledon since 1986. I have over 40 years' experience in the communication research industry and am the current Chair of the Wimbledon East Hillside Residents' Association.

Sara Sharp: I strongly believe in community, a planning system that works and a sustainable, greener, net zero carbon future.

Leigh Terrafranca: Resident of Wimbledon since 1997. WEHRA Planning and Licensing Officer. Winner of Future Wimbledon Design Competition, Creative Communities Award 2014. Green Coffee member. Merton Tree warden. Keen interest in a zero carbon world.

How to get involved

Above all, we need your support in becoming members of the group. You can access the membership application form via the website – <http://www.wimbledon-npg.org/>

For those of you who want to take a more active part in the process then please contact our Chair, Vince Harris, on chair@wimbledon-npg.org

