

5 July 2021

By email

Subject: Your vote on 7 July

Dear Councillor [Name],

At the full council meeting of 7 July 2021, **you will cast your vote on an important community matter: PlanWimbledon's designation as a neighbourhood forum and area.**

We hope you listen to the voice of more than 1,300 consultation participants, **90%** of whom **support** PlanWimbledon's application, and that you will vote accordingly in support of our designation.

PlanWimbledon

PlanWimbledon's aim is to produce a neighbourhood plan for our area. The plan will complement Merton Local Plan in matters such as design, planning policy and sustainability standards.

Many thousands of people in Wimbledon are members or represented by organisations that are members of PlanWimbledon. They each have something at stake, being parents, local workers or business owners, or being involved in a wide range of educational, faith and other organisations. They come from all age groups, ethnicities, and parts of town.

A neighbourhood plan is prepared under strict regulations, and has to observe the local plan's strategic policies. Furthermore, a neighbourhood plan is subject to external examiner review for conformity before a local referendum.

PlanWimbledon is inclusive, non-political, not-for-profit and pro-progress. We represent a unique opportunity to build mutual understanding with the whole community, its stakeholders and the council. We urge you, as councillors, to recognise how unique and effective this could be.

The process

In February, PlanWimbledon formally applied to Merton Council to become a neighbourhood forum (an organisation that can prepare a neighbourhood plan). Merton's Cabinet voted unanimously that PlanWimbledon's application met the legal criteria for a neighbourhood forum and area, and should be taken forward for public consultation.

The public response to the consultation was overwhelmingly supportive, with around 90% in favour. Neighbourhood Planners London (the coordinating network) has said of the consultation: **'The sheer number of responses PlanWimbledon generated is exceptional.'** The consultation has established clearly that **the people of Wimbledon want a neighbourhood plan.**

In our view, the **report from Future Merton to the Cabinet and councillors is not a reliable representation of PlanWimbledon's case and of the consultation results.** The report seems to be written to refuse designation from the outset, by downplaying the enormous public support for PlanWimbledon, overstating minor items, and showing scant regard to the depth of outreach

PlanWimbledon has achieved with the residential and business communities. The Cabinet has followed Future Merton's report conclusion and voted against PlanWimbledon's designation. Surprisingly, given the weight of public support, their decision was reached with no meaningful discussion.

We trust that you, as a democratically elected representative of the local population, will instead respect the will of the community and vote in favour of the community's rights under the Localism Act 2011.

The opportunity

Neighbourhood planning, established under the Localism Act 2011, has cross-party support. It is already underway in more than 1,000 places across the country. Merton is one of a dwindling number of London boroughs without a neighbourhood forum.

Many communities across the borough, including Colliers Wood, Morden and Raynes Park, have a keen interest in seeing PlanWimbledon being designated. As possible potential neighbourhood forums themselves, **they expect councillors to actively support neighbourhood planning and PlanWimbledon.** How you will cast your vote will certainly draw the attention of your ward electors.

Wimbledon plays an important role in the borough of Merton. It is not only a brand ambassador, but also a major contributor to the borough's finances. With the council and PlanWimbledon working in collaboration, we can ensure that we shape Wimbledon for a prosperous and sustainable future.

We hope you will stand up for local democracy by voting for PlanWimbledon's designation as a neighbourhood forum and area.

Thank you for your support.

Regards,

On behalf of PlanWimbledon,

