



Love Wimbledon  
5th Floor, Tuition House  
St George's Road, Wimbledon  
London SW19 4EU  
  
C/o Paul Harvey, Chairman

London, 21 April 2021

Dear Paul,

Thank you for your invitation to speak at the Love Wimbledon board meeting on 25 March 2021.

We were extremely disappointed to learn of Love Wimbledon's subsequent rapid decision not to support PlanWimbledon's proposed designation as a neighbourhood forum and, therefore, not to work with us towards a unified neighbourhood plan for the benefit of the whole of Wimbledon.

We feel that there has been insufficient discussion and, therefore, understanding of what neighbourhood planning is, what our aims are, and how they would benefit Wimbledon. We would welcome an open debate on any issues you have. Until then, we would like to address three key concerns that Love Wimbledon raised at our meeting:

1. We are perplexed by your comment that the area is 'too large'. There is no limit to the size of an area which can be designated for a neighbourhood forum. Our proposed area corresponds perfectly within Merton Council's 20-minute neighbourhood classification, which features prominently in their new Local Plan. What is important is that there is a sound, coherent logic which applies across the area, binding the territory together, which PlanWimbledon's proposed area does. Indeed, PlanWimbledon has spent the past year discussing the area with all sectors of the community. The boundary we have drawn is one within which the people are emotionally and/or economically invested in Wimbledon: they use the local services, the shops, the schools, the workplaces, the hospitality venues, and the transport hubs.

2. While a neighbourhood plan has an overarching design, it also has the facility to address the specific needs of the separate areas within it, while preserving the cohesion of the total neighbourhood area. A characteristic of Wimbledon town centre is that business exists cheek by jowl with residents. This interdependence is likely to get even stronger as new post-pandemic work patterns result in local residents forming a much higher proportion of the revenue of local business.

3. At our meeting you appeared to have the impression that we were a resident only association, and you voiced your concerns about residents not being supportive of business.

First, we are certainly not a resident-only association, as demonstrated by the fact that our membership already includes a significant number of businesses, faith groups, community associations and schools etc.

Second, we are certainly not against business, quite the opposite. We want the town centre to thrive and to be one everyone is proud of as this is the heart of the area, drawing shoppers and workers from across the surrounding area. We strongly feel that this will happen only if there is a plan for the whole area, as the town centre relies on the residents and the residents rely on the town centre. Together we are stronger.

The spirit of the Localism Act is to empower communities to come together and define a shared vision of the future planning of their area. Love Wimbledon's stated opposition to PlanWimbledon and intention to create its own business-led neighbourhood plan are highly divisive, and risk further alienating the local population from the town centre. This is hurting the local community, including businesses, precisely at a time when rethinking about high streets is paramount, and when the world of work is coming back to life.

In conclusion, we believe that a separate forum covering the town centre alone could only:

- promote disharmony, by creating an artificial boundary where design codes, sustainability policies, materials etc. differ across the neighbourhood, creating unnecessary complexity and lacking a common strategic vision and aesthetic cohesion.
- deny those living and working in the wider neighbourhood a statutory say in what happens in their town centre, the beating heart of their community and running counter to the encouragement of local democracy.
- delay neighbourhood planning in Wimbledon particularly by subjecting it to any uncertainties around Love Wimbledon's own future.

PlanWimbledon firmly believes that there should be just one single neighbourhood forum for Wimbledon, with all interested parties working together in a spirit of openness and collaboration. This is the spirit of neighbourhood planning and reflects the interwoven character of the area, nurturing the interdependency of residential and commercial interests. It will also be the most democratic and efficient way to make sure that Wimbledon prospers in a sustainable way as a balanced community.

We urge you to reconsider collaborating with PlanWimbledon to help create the sustainable, prosperous community and infrastructure that our shared community deserves.

As you know, PlanWimbledon's application for official designation as the neighbourhood forum for the proposed area is under consultation as we speak. We had hoped that we would be able to approach local businesses in partnership with Love Wimbledon, however, given that this is currently not the case, we will find ourselves compelled to intensify our outreaches to all businesses, some of which may be members of Love Wimbledon.

We would very much welcome meeting with you to discuss these and any other issues you have with PlanWimbledon, to ensure that we both have clarity on each other's thoughts.

On behalf of PlanWimbledon,

Suzanne Grocott, Chair

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Suzanne Grocott". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.