

From: Avery L

Thank you for alerting me to the above (both via email and through the post). I have now had the opportunity to consider this in detail and would like to make the following comments re **Wimbledon Library/Marlboough Hall** (35 Wimbledon Hill Road):

Overarching Concern:

Currently this site has the following (granted) usage: Library (D1); Adult Education (D1) and x1 Apartment (C3). Short of the construction of a hotel(!) - as on other site applications listed in your latest document - the requests for this site are "all encompassing" (to allow as many permutations as possible for the Council further down the line).

My overarching concern is thus that this application is far too "open ended" and that it is unfair for you to expect members of the public to fully appreciate what could happen should these proposals be approved. I therefore feel that before this application is carried forward, specific detail should be included. This is what members of the general public have to do when submitting an application and I do not see why the Council should not be at least as "accountable" as "the people they serve"if not more so. It all smacks of "development by stealth".

And before I am accused of paranoia, what I find telling are the "evolving" conflicting statements from Cllr Judge in this week's W/Don Guardian. Specifically:

* "We have absolutely **no plans to move the library at all**"

* "Adding (to the Sites & Policies document) wording (proposed @ the Council Meeting and rejected) **stymies what we could do with the existing site** and would prevent us from examining the potential for a new better library.

* "We do not know what **opportunities will occur in W/Don Town Centre** over the next few years **and if a site became available** that allowed us to build a much better library and community facility **in the middle of the town centre, we would want to examine it seriously**"

Specifics (per application):

* **Retail (A1):** Permission to NOT BE GRANTED. This application "opens the door" to the Ground Floor no longer being used as a Library (as no potential Retailer would want a shop positioned on the First Floor as it would be away from "passing trade")

* **Restaurants & Cafes (A3)**: Permission to NOT BE GRANTED for precisely the same reasons as quoted above for Retail. Additional reasons for not granting permission would be that:

- Having these along the Compton Rd side could have a real (noise pollution) impact on this (currently) quiet tree-lined residential road (full of local families). Noise (from departing revellers) has previously been a problem with All Bar One (who occupy the corner site at the top of this road) and with the outdoor drinking/dining @ The Alexandra (which fronts onto St Marks Place). Having even more dining establishments opening will exacerbate the problem.
- Any creation (of such establishments) would adversely affect the already dire parking situation in this street where, because the front gardens are so small/majority of houses are semi-detached, none of the owners have driveways/garages and already struggle to find a parking space.

* **Professional Services (A2) & Office (B1)**: Permission to be granted only if it applies to Marlborough Hall/top floor of Library and if specific mention is made that it is NOT applicable to the Ground Floor area currently occupied by the Library.

* **Residential (C3)**: Permission to be granted only if it applies to Marlborough Hall/top floor of Library and if specific mention is made that it NOT be applicable to the Ground Floor area currently occupied by the Library.

These plans have already caused huge condemnation in the immediate area and despite protestations by a variety of (Labour) Councillors that nothing "untoward" is afoot, this doesn't "ring true" (given the lack of specifics/comments made in the press). If nothing Machiavellian/untoward is truly the case, then I don't see why there can't be more transparency in what is being proposed/a caveat included that the Library will remain on the Ground Floor **in the current location**, occupying the same amount of space. And even if the Council is (genuinely) wedded to it remaining @ 35 W/Don Hill Rd (though all the signals are to the contrary) even relocating any part of it to the First Floor would have an adverse effect on all, in particular:

* **Mothers** attending the **Storytelling/Singalong**sessions** (held several times a week). The majority of these Mums turn up with pushchairshow would they manage the stairs each morning??. A First Floor location would be completely impractical. (**Hugely popular, with on average of c 40 Mums with children coming along).

* **Computer Room**: Even with c24 computers, by lunchtime this is often operating @ 100% capacity (with people queueing for the next available machine). If the number of computers were to be downscaled, it would have considerable impact+++ on those without computer access who are (for example) looking for jobs (+++particularly given the only Internet Cafe in W/Don (at the other end of the Broadway) is soon to close).

* **Students**: Post school/every Half Term/Holiday every single seat and desk is taken up by schoolchildren/students doing homework/studying for exams...the Library is

virtually "bursting at the seams" during this time.. These schoolchildren/students need a quiet environment in which to work, which (being alongside a quiet residential street) the current location provides. Location in the Town Centre would affect this aura of peace and tranquillity considerably. Additionally, I am concerned (given they struggle to find a spare spot in its current size) whether a new facility would be able to provide such a large seating area.

IN CONCLUSION: This whole thing smacks of "selling the family silver". The Library (in its current location in the beautiful listed building) is the "beating heart" of the local Wimbledon community and is also used by the myriad number of visitors who come to Wimbledon.....who.sometimes use the facilities themselves and who often take photographs en route to watch the tennis/visit the Museum (there)/etc. To hide it away on the First Floor (or worse, the Town Centre ...which will get no passing visitors) is a disgraceful act (should it come about). And what unseemly haste re the potential implementation....almost days after the end of the Covenant . The current location is "position perfect" for visitors and the immediate local community, plus it is also within a c4 mins walking distance of several schools.....relocating it to a Town Centre position would thus (potentially) disincentivise these children from using it.

I see that the Council has already put its publicity machine in operation on its London Borough of Merton website home page, where it has the sub head"Council confirms commitment to Wimbledon Library". In this Cllr Drapper states: "There is no truth in the bizarre rumour that it (W/Don Library) could close or change its use". In fact, this isn't what the "rumour" is at all. What residents are concerned about is not the fact that it might close (I don't think even Labour would have the gall to do this) but that it move either to the First Floor or (worse) to the Town Centre. . Tellingly , Cllr Drapper doesn't actually go as far as putting in writing the key words "and it will remain in its current location", so this PR piece (on the website) is a blatant case of "smoke and mirrors". Particularly when read in conjunction with the comments made by Cllr Judge in the W/Don Guardian.. This stealth plan is a travesty and goes against everything the Covenant originally intended.

And a question for everyone involved with this shameful proposal. What will happen (if the Library is relocated) to the wonderful (28 in total) murals (of varying sizes) in the Library?? These were painted in 1947 by W/Don Art Students, so have true historical value and by 2019 (planned implementation date) they will have been in existence for 70+yrs. These were described (in The Wimbledon Borough News) at the time as "The "fulfilment of a dream long ago". The children's library is now a work of art. Students transform a "Victorian warehouse" at their own expense and in their own time". So much for having a dream.....bet they will wish they hadn't bothered if this plan goes ahead!!