

James McGinley
Future Merton
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20th April 2012

Dear James

Representations on “Part II Potential Sites for New Uses”

Following our meeting I am pleased to confirm the following comments on the above document.

1. Permitted and/or Preferred Uses?

As a matter of general practice and unless for a the benefit of a particularly policy, the Council needs to define the precise uses or uses that **must** be accommodated in any re-development, it should avoid being too prescriptive as to specific uses or, the mix of uses required within the description of any particular site.

There is currently some ambiguity in the descriptions of the preferred uses. In some cases they imply that a specific mix must be incorporated and in others, that a range of uses might be considered. Other sites refer to “an appropriate mix”.

An example can be seen by comparing Site Proposal 01 (“P3”, Hartfield Road Car Park) with Site Proposal 12 (Queens Road Car Park). In the former, the Council’s preferred use is stated as “mixed’ followed by a list of the uses that are required in that mix. In the latter, the preferred use is stated as “Any of the following or, a suitable mix of.....”

Thus, as currently drafted, to comply with policy any developer would need to demonstrate provision of all the stated uses in a redevelopment of the Hartfield Road Car Park whereas with Queens Road car park there is far more flexibility in the proposed policy, providing the opportunity to include one or more of the uses.

This is potentially relevant to a number of the sites within the Proposal document and the councils preferred or, required uses, should be reviewed in each case with a view to providing flexibility and clarity.

The representation is made to reduce ambiguity and increase flexibility in the policy, to secure better certainty of delivering improvements to the Borough through development, in a shorter timescale, together with improved financial returns to the Borough

This conclusion is founded on the established principle that if the use or mix of uses proposed within a development are chosen by the developer – and are thus market driven – the development will be more likely to proceed in a shorter timescale and yield higher returns. Generally, the more uses that are included, the more complicated, less certain and less valuable the resultant solution will be, particularly where non income producing uses are concerned.

Consequently the Council should only prescribe that a particular use or mix of uses **must** be included on a site, if necessary for specific policy reasons.

2. Active Street Frontages

In the Wimbledon town centre proposals (I note particularly, Sites 28, 31 and 63), there is a stated desire for “Active Street Frontages”, a term that is usually translated into meaning that A1, A3, A4 and A5 should be incorporated on the ground floor.

There is, arguably, an oversupply of these uses on the street frontage in Wimbledon. The rise in the number of bars/drinking establishments in the town centre over the last decade has contributed to a decline in the quality of the environment and the evenings, particularly in The Broadway.

When included under an office development they reduce the investment value of the building, due to the increased management and letting risks arising and their potential incompatibility with a prestige office users/tenants

“Active Street Frontages” should thus be deemed to be achieved by permitting offices at ground floor level provided some other means (such as glazed curtain walling to the ground floor) are adopted. This has been successfully incorporated in the Institute of Personnel Development building and makes a positive contribution to the Broadway.

3. Site Proposal 01 (“P3” Hartfield Road Car Park)

The preferred use should include Offices (B1a Use Class).

Having regard to extant policy that there shall be no high-rise development in Wimbledon this site is the most likely, indeed, possibly the only location on which could be sited and office development of substantial size with the benefit of large floor plates. A large office development in Wimbledon would make significant contributions to finance, employment and the reputation of Wimbledon as a recognized office location.

While I note the Council has been advised there is no demand for such a building I believe that, having regard to the communications of Wimbledon with, the West End, The City and

Croydon, its international reputation and wealthy residents, many of whom are senior corporate decision makers, there would be demand such a building, from both, long term investors and occupiers.

The development could flexibly be designed to accommodate smaller as well as larger users.

The Council should have regard to this when determining the use mix for this site, relative to its desire to secure significant and quality employment in the Borough. As the market currently stands, office use would be likely to be outbid by residential use if that use was permitted as an alternative. A mixed use scheme of residential and offices would need to facilitate vertical, rather than horizontal, separation of the two uses.

4. Site Proposal 12 (Queens Road Car Park)

Possible uses should also include Class B1 (c) – light industrial and B8 – storage.

The best use for this site would be predominantly B1(a) – offices, but the configuration size and location of the property is such that some users might have an element of manufacturing/processing and/or storage as part of an office function.

5. Site Proposal 37 (Wimbledon Greyhound Stadium)

Permitted Use should include, retail A1 (with any restrictions) and Car Dealerships (Sui Generis)

The latter use is much and unreasonably maligned. A good quality manufacturer or franchisee provides an institutionally acceptable covenant, quality buildings, a business that provides a high ratio of employment (including skilled 'blue collar') to floor area and a relatively benign impact on the transport network.

6. Grouped Sites

The words "high quality hotel" are ambiguous. Presumably it is intended to mean a 4 or 5 star hotel, rather than a high quality budget hotel.

Yours sincerely

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Managing Director

c.c. (By email) Paul McGarry, L B Merton.

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23th April 2012

Dear James

Representations on Potential Sites Review

Thank you, to you and Paul McGarry, for meeting me in regard to the above. It was interesting to hear of the refreshing and innovative new structures you have put in place for the Forward Merton team and I wish you success with those.

I attach some written up comments/representations on the Part II document and hope you find them constructive. I have also made a personal representation on Site 30 as a resident of Kenilworth Avenue but have sent that by email under separate cover.

When we met I had intended to ask you about the Weir Road Industrial Estate, in which I believe the Council has significant interest and which I think also has prospects for improvement/development. I hope you don't mind if I call you about this, and about whom I might speak to concerning the likely availability dates for the various Council sites under consideration.

Yours sincerely

Jeremy R Needs MRICS
Managing Director

c.c. By Email : Paul McGarry