



Easter 2014



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Easter edition 2014

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Editorial help needed. Contact Iain Simpson on 020 8947 1301

Chairman's Report

Wimbledon Park Hall

After a great deal of toing and froing we took possession of the new Hall in the middle of February. The final result is terrific. The finish by the developers has been to a very high standard and the cooperation from those at the Council dealing with the project was really excellent. Everyone who has been to see it has been very impressed by the space. Huge thanks are due to David Watkins who bore the brunt of coordinating the finishing work, over the last few months, between the developers and the Council.

As always, there are still a few issues to deal with but we are now fully operational in the Hall and already have several regular hirers established. Martial arts seem to be very popular as is ballet for toddlers! Demand for weekend functions is also strong as well. The Café is taking a little longer to organise. Interest in taking it over is growing and we are sorting out the necessary paperwork required. Being a commercial lease, we are keen to strike a fair balance between obtaining a reasonable rent and encouraging the right people to run it who will make it into the kind of community café that we think local people will appreciate and which will be successful.

All the Hall hiring information is on the website at www.wimbledonpark.com. The email address for Hall hire inquiries is wimbledonparkhall@gmail.com. You can always email direct through the website. You should get a reply within 24 hours.

A Pedestrian Crossing in Leopold Road?

Those who frequent Leopold Road will know what a busy road it is and how difficult it can be to cross safely, when there is so much traffic. I have been approached by Family Franzini to raise awareness of their efforts to raise a petition of sufficient strength to convince the Council to install a crossing and also some road calming. Please read the article on page 22 and support the petition if you can.

Friends of Wimbledon Park (FOWP)

I would like to draw your attention to the enthusiastic work being carried out by the FOWP. If you read their 'update' on Page 12, you will see that there is a very interesting initiative to upgrade the Athletics stadium in the Park, in conjunction with the Wimbledon Club, whose premises are on the opposite side of the lake, and several other key stakeholders including the Hercules Athletic Club, who are the major users. The stadium, which is the only one of its kind in the borough, has been left to deteriorate over the years and is in a very sad state for such a

valuable asset. The Council does not have the funds (or does not feel the site deserves the funds) to make any major improvements. Therefore any major upgrade is going to largely rely on local initiative and outside funding. This initiative needs widespread support from local residents.

Parking in Arthur Road and surrounds

Recently a letter from Councillors went around to most of the roads in Parking-Zone P1 regarding parking problems that had been recently raised by local residents. This letter indicated that they had raised the issue of extending the current parking restrictions with Chris Lee, Director of Environment and Regeneration, and that anyone supporting a change in the parking restrictions should write to him. Any changes in local parking restrictions need to be carefully considered. As we know, changes made in one area can have a knock on effect in the adjoining areas, just the same as road closures. The main problem appears to be parking by football fans on match days. Wimbledon Park is the last stop on the tube line where there is free parking after 3pm on weekdays and entirely at weekends. However this is not the only problem and we are sure there are a variety of views about the nature of the problem and what people feel would be the right solution. Therefore accompanying this newsletter is a survey form which is being distributed to all roads in Zone P1. We are asking all residents to complete the form and return to designated points by the 30th April. We will try to produce the results as quickly as we can. The form has been design largely by a local resident and we hope provides the right questions and opportunity for response. Generally we feel that this is the right way to gauge the nature of the problem and local resident views before deciding on any further action.

The Greyhound Stadium proposals (site 37)

A great deal of work has been going on since the last newsletter appeared and this is covered in detail by the article on Pages 8,9 and 10. In particular it refers to Inspectors Examination in January. The sessions were quite lengthy and it was interesting to hear the arguments put forward by all interested parties. We had some degree of success in having changes made as a result of our arguments. The article also refers to the survey carried out in the last two months by the WPRAs. The results of his survey are published on page 7. More roads may be surveyed in the near future but so far over two hundred houses have been surveyed and the results are reasonably consistent.

There is a certain momentum now building behind these proposals and it may not be long before we see a planning application appear. *Iain Simpson*





Survey on Greyhound Stadium Development Proposals

The Wimbledon Park Residents Association has carried out a survey in Wimbledon Park Ward asking residents' opinion on three questions which concerned the development of the Greyhound Stadium.

The results can be summarised as follows

[Q1] 85% had not received any communication from Merton Council asking their opinion on the proposed development of the Greyhound Stadium. Only 4% thought they had received such a communication and 11% did not know if they had or not.

[Q2] 80% thought that a development comprising a 20,000 seater football stadium, 600 residential units and some retail space was not very beneficial for local residents while 8% thought it was beneficial and 12% did not know.

[Q3] 72% opposed the development just mentioned, 11% neither supported or opposed, 10% supported it and 7% did not know.

The survey was carried out by knocking on successive doors in the road being surveyed and if there was a response, asking the persons who answered if they would take part in the survey. As a result a randomly chosen, and so representative, set of residents were questioned.

202 households were surveyed and, using a standard statistical formula, we can estimate the possible errors in our results compared to those that would follow from surveying all the residents; for example, on question 2 as 80% plus or minus 3%, 8% plus or minus 2% and 12% plus or minus 2% respectively.

It is clear from these results that the proposed development of a 20,000 seater football stadium, 600 residential units and some retail space is substantially opposed by the residents of Wimbledon Park Ward. Consequently the results of the survey will underpin any future actions by the Association.

Update on the Greyhound Stadium Development

In this article we will outline some of the recent developments relating to the proposals for the site containing the Greyhound Stadium.

The Visit of the Planning Inspector

The Planning Inspector came to Merton to hear the submissions concerning the Greyhound Stadium on the 23 January 2014. The task of the Inspector was to ensure that the Local Development Plan put forward by Merton Council, in which the Greyhound Stadium site was one of the most important, was sound.

Merton Council had proposed to deliver the Greyhound site through a supplementary planning document. The Wimbledon Park Residents Association (WPRA) opposed this, citing National Planning Guidelines. Essentially we feared that this would be a process not subject to the scrutiny required to ensure that the planning rules were correctly applied. The Planning Inspector agreed with us and this method of delivering the site was withdrawn by Merton Council. Another success, which was supported by WPRA and Merton Council, but opposed by the developer Galliard Homes, was that the site of the Greyhound Stadium was confirmed as a site most at risk of flooding (technically a 3b designation). This will place restrictions on what can be developed on it.

However, it is unclear if the Inspector will support the WPRA's wish to revise the description of the Greyhound Stadium site as regards transport and flooding. It was claimed that these comments were "just sign posts". Merton Council opposed this change and explained that it would fully comply with National Planning Guidelines. We must await the Planning Inspector's final report to find out his final thinking on this point, but we will in any case be holding Merton Council to their words.

The Submission of the Scoping report by Galliard Homes GLRA Ltd and AFC Wimbledon

Even before the Inspector has finalised his report, Galliard Homes, GLRA Ltd and AFC Wimbledon have submitted what is called a scoping report. This document is a forerunner to the inevitable planning application that they are going to submit and it concerns the type of studies they must carry out and submit with their plan-

ning application. These developers are hoping to construct a 20,000 seater football stadium, 613 residential units and some retail space.

The WPRAs have made a submission to Merton Council objecting to the very limited nature of the proposed studies in the scoping document. We do not think that the developers should only consider how to dispose of the "surface water" on the site. Instead they should comply with National Planning Policies as they apply to a 3b functional flood plain. This site has two sources of flooding: the ground water, arising from the fact that the site is on gravel bed, and also possible flooding from the River Wandle should it overflow as it has in the past. We think the developers should explain how they will hold, within the site, all the water generated from either source and in particular not allow the water to escape to the surrounding areas. Furthermore they should do this in such a way that the flooding on the site is no more than it is at present. We note that the site was subject to regular flooding throughout the winter.

The site is universally acknowledged to have a very poor transport rating (technically a PTAL score of 2) which cannot be significantly improved. As such the very substantial number of crowds will have to walk to the stadium from the transport hubs such as Wimbledon Station, Wimbledon Park, Haydon's Road, Earlsfield and Tooting Broadway in Wandsworth. It is difficult to imagine that such large crowds can be accommodated without causing problems in the shopping centres and residential areas. We note that it is often the case that modern stadiums are largely designed so as to keep crowds away from residential and shopping centres.

To financially service such a large stadium it is likely that it will be used for other purposes such as concerts and other sporting activities. The developers have not proposed any realistic solution to the transport problems. They suggested that "transport effects will be considered and assessed for the surrounding network where links will experience a change of traffic greater than 30%...". Local residents will know that even a modest increase in traffic, and certainly one much less than 30%, will bring chaos to the, already heavily congested, surrounding roads.

Merton Council did commission a study in 1996 to see if it was possible to build a 20,000 seater stadium on the Greyhound site. However the study concluded that this would not be possible and it would only be possible for a 10,000 seater

stadium if there was a dedicated tram link built to the site. While this study is old, its conclusion still holds, particularly once one realises that traffic on local roads has trebled since 1996.

The cavalier attitude of the developers to the planning guidelines is not very encouraging and one might be left with the impression that they do not care about local residents and are only interested in achieving their own ambitions regardless of the effects on the residents of Wimbledon Park Ward.

Our View

There are essentially two proposals for the redevelopment of the Greyhound Stadium. As we have mentioned, Galliard Homes, GLRA Ltd and AFC Wimbledon want to build a 20,000 seater football stadium, 613 residential units and some retail space. While a group, lead by Paschal Taggart, wants to build an upmarket stadium for Greyhound Racing (maximum capacity 4,500), 400 residential units and some retail space.

We have explained in our submissions to Merton Council during the consultation period that we think that the proposal by Galliard Homes GLRA Ltd and AFC is incompatible with National Planning Policies. As we have mentioned, the site is one at highest risk of flooding and is in a transport area with a very poor rating and we do not think that it can be modified to satisfy the planning policies that apply. Planning policies are there to ensure that new developments do not adversely impact local residents and shopping centres. While we certainly do not oppose AFC Wimbledon coming back to the borough we do not think the Greyhound Stadium site is suitable.

Clearly, the Greyhound proposal does not have the same transport problems, as the crowds will be rather similar to those that presently use the stadium. It is also possible that they can design their proposal in such a way that they do satisfy the National Flooding Guidelines. We note that their proposed stadium only has three sides and the centre is an area which can be used to hold flood water; certainly they have submitted a comprehensive and interesting flood study at the consultation stages.

The survey carried out by the Wimbledon Park Residents Association, which results are reported in this newsletter, showed that a large majority of residents are opposed to the proposal of Galliard Homes, GLRA Ltd and AFC Wimbledon.

This concurs with the planning arguments we have consistently advanced and as a result we oppose the proposal of Galliard Homes GLRA Ltd and AFC Wimbledon and support the Greyhound proposal. We will be asking if our local councillors, and the conservative grouping as a whole, if they will change their stance and clearly support the viewpoint of the residents in their ward.

The Outlook

Once Galliard Homes GLRA Ltd and AFC Wimbledon have made a planning application it will be considered by the Merton Council who will at the same time notify the Mayor, Boris Johnson. It is rather likely that he will call in the application and decide on it himself. He has already made encouraging noises in favour of the Greyhound proposal and this coupled with the planning difficulties of the other proposal, mean that there is everything to play for.

We will continue with our endeavours to ensure that that any development of the Greyhound Stadium is appropriate in planning terms; beneficial for the area and will take into account the interests of local residents who will be most affected.

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An update from the Friends of Wimbledon Park

A groundswell of support is building for change in our local park. The Friends of Wimbledon Park (FOWP) now has more than 130 individual members and covers 6,000 households through the affiliation of the various local residents' associations. People are finally waking up to the fact that we have a 60 ha Grade II* Heritage Park on our doorstep – one that must be carefully looked after for future generations.

After winning a hard-fought campaign against Merton Borough Council's car park extension last autumn, FOWP has been turning its attention to more long-term issues affecting the park. These include the deteriorating quality of the lake, the poor state of the athletics stadium and the urgent need to protect natural habitats, such as the areas of ancient woodland. There is also a growing awareness of the future impact of next year's budget cuts, which will affect all of Merton's green spaces.

FOWP's priority has been to create a Conservation Management Plan (CMP) covering three types of activities: sport, study and wellbeing. With these in mind it has produced a project plan, allowing specific projects to be developed within a coherent framework. The projects currently being worked on include:

The lake

FOWP's vision is for a healthy natural habitat, catering for walking, angling and watersports, with a footpath and boardwalk right round the lake perimeter. A 1998 report by consultant Glasspoole Thomson analysed water quality and silt levels, concluding that the lake was in a hypereutrophic state, with high levels of phosphorous and other nutrients. In autumn 2013, Merton Borough Council commissioned a further report to obtain a more up-to-date picture and see whether the silt depths had increased in the intervening period. This report has not yet published. FOWP believes it is vital to regenerate the lake – a huge and costly undertaking – but will only be able to move forward on this with the agreement of the three owners (Merton Borough Council, the All England Lawn Tennis Club and the Wimbledon Club).

The athletics stadium

The athletics stadium is in need of an upgrade. FOWP has been working closely with the Wimbledon Club and other users such as local schools and the Hercules Club to rethink the entire site, with a better clubhouse and facilities for field sports, as well as the creation of a hockey pitch in the centre of the running track. An architect has drawn up plans and a planning application is likely to be submitted soon.

Revelstoke Road improvements

FOWP wants to see a much better entrance to the park at the Revelstoke Road gate, including a 20mph speed limit, pavement changes and redesigned pathways into the park. It has carried out a survey of residents living in the street, who were almost universally in favour of the scheme. Carrying out the changes will require approval and funding from Merton and Wandsworth Borough Councils.

Trees

Recent tree works in the golf course and the public park suggest that Tree Preservation Orders (TPOs) are needed for the whole 60 ha park. This will help place nature conservation and landscape more firmly on the agenda and will involve all three owners of the

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park as well as officers in Merton and Wandsworth.

We need you to get involved!

Although the regeneration of Wimbledon Park may seem a daunting challenge, there is every reason to be ambitious. Other London parks have been successful in their bids for grants, such as Burgess Park in Southwark (c. £8m), Bishop's Park in Hammersmith & Fulham (c. £8m) and Wandle Park in Croydon (c. £3.5m).

FOWP needs as many people as possible to get involved. It welcomes new members, and wants to hear your views and ideas. You can find out more at

www.friendsofwimbledonpark.org.uk. There is also a Facebook page at www.facebook.com/FriendsofWimbledonPark and a Twitter feed at @fowpsw19

Join in a free nature walk

Come along to the park on Sunday 27 April for a free nature walk, led by local expert Dr David Dawson. The two-and-a-half-hour walk will give you an enjoyable and informative introduction to the park's spring wildflowers and nesting birds. Meet at the Home Park Road entrance at 10am. Bring binoculars.

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DO WE NEED FRONT GARDENS?

Do we value our gardens, or is the space at the front of the house just somewhere to store the rubbish / bicycle / motorcycle / car? With a little planning and effort we could fulfil some of these requirements as well as having an attractive garden. With a mix of hard and permeable surfaces one can provide planting areas alongside parking space, whilst a living roof could improve the appearance of a low shed for bins or cycles. Think also in three dimensions and use porches or window sills for containers, and house walls for plant support.

The Front Garden Awards were introduced in 1991 to raise awareness of the importance of gardens to the overall quality of the Wimbledon Park streetscape. The front gardens range in size from tiny to quite large, but even the smallest has potential for planting, as is evident from some past winners.

A new Award introduced last year for 'Environmental Sustainability' tries to address current issues such as water conservation, air quality, and the provision of wildlife habitats. We can all help by keeping some permeable soil (to prevent rapid run-off of storm water), by growing plants attractive to wildlife (for nectar, food, shelter), plants tolerant to drought, or as ground cover. The re-cycling of materials for landscaping or as plant containers are other examples of sustainable gardening.

If you are not sure how to get started, look around you to see what plants do well in other gardens nearby. There is also a wealth of advice available in books and magazines, TV programmes, and at nurseries and garden centres, so enjoy experimenting. You could find it rewarding to meet your neighbours and passers-by as you tend your 'patch', and we will all benefit from a greener neighbourhood.

Jill Farmer



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Friends Of Wimbledon Park

To join the 'Friends of Wimbledon Park' (FOWP) please complete the following:

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Title Forename Surname **

Corporate name.....

Address

.....

Post Code Application Date.....

Email*** Phone:.....

*If youth add date of birth here.....

**Family add any children's names under 16 years on back or separate sheet with date of birth.

***Would you like to be included on an email list for FOWP updates & information? YES/NO

Please circle your interests: Trees / Plants / Wildlife / Birds / Sport / Dogs / Kids / Other.....

I can offer help with: Catering / Stewarding at events / Secretarial / Gardening / Other.....

Annual subscription rates (circle selection)

Adult	£5	Family	£8
Youth-(16 -21)	£1	Corporate	£50

Your details will be kept on computer solely for administration purposes

Payment preferably by cheque made payable to 'Friends of Wimbledon Park'

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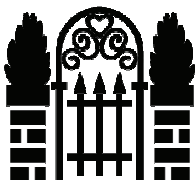
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Wimbledon Park Residents' Association
Front Garden Awards
2014

This is to announce our annual search for the most attractive Front Gardens in Wimbledon Park. A team of local residents will be looking at all gardens visible from the street to nominate their favourites for an Award. From these, a panel of judges will choose the best in the following categories:

Best Summer Interest Garden
Best All-year Interest Garden
Best Environmentally Sustainable Garden

Judging will take place on the following dates:

Preliminary round: 19 – 25 June

Final selections: Sunday 29 June

We will inform all those whose gardens are selected for the final judging, and results will be posted to them within a few days.

Presentation of the awards will take place at the WPRA AGM in the Autumn.

We are always looking for new people to get involved with the judging, so if you are interested and are willing to spare a few hours of your time, please get in touch.

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Why should I support the Residents' Association?

There has been some sort of Residents' Association in Wimbledon Park since 1906. It provides a forum for discussing important local issues and a platform for action. Since its inception, the Residents' Association has helped hundreds, probably thousands of local residents, irrespective of religion, race or creed who have turned to the committee for guidance and support.

We regularly check local planning applications and have been very successful in opposing unsuitable developments. We promote planting and improvements in local parks and green areas. We work with the local police to help you to fight crime in your street and keep you informed by publishing the crime statistics in our newsletter.

We have led the initiative to redevelop Wimbledon Park Hall – so that once again we can have our own community centre. We have put on fairs and shows and supported numerous local campaigns, individuals and families faced with tragedy. The Residents' Association has given the Wimbledon Park Community a solid and respected voice when dealing with Merton Council. An individual can achieve only so much, but as a team we can and do achieve so much more.

This area is growing and improving all the time. Your Residents' Association is more active than ever and we are happy to put in time and effort on your behalf. But we cannot function without funds. We did extremely well financially from the three Edwardian Fairs we ran in past years but that money has been put aside for the running of the new Hall.

We need you to support your local Residents' Association ideally for 3 years, which is only £12. Twelve pounds for a 3 year period will help us pay for printing and stationary to publish this newsletter, computer and IT software to run the website, materials and equipment to organise events and keep the flowerboxes blooming in Arthur Road.

Please take a moment to fill in the very brief form on the opposite page. We regret that unless an email address is supplied, we are unable to acknowledge receipt.

If you are already a member but are not sure of your current status, email to wpsecretary@blueyonder.co.uk and we will check for you.

Thanks in advance for your support. It is hugely appreciated.

DeNica Fairman, Membership Secretary

To Join the Wimbledon Park Residents' Association

Please complete this form and return it to us with your payment:

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Address _____

Post Code _____

Email*** _____

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3 Years.....£12.00

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You are welcome to drop your subscription through the door of the Membership Secretary, DeNica Fairman at 3 Strathmore Rd, or of our Chairman, Iain Simpson at 56 Home Park Rd.

Email* If you would like to be included on an e-mail list for crime alerts, WPRA updates and information on other important local issues, Please tick here**

☐

Please date...../...../.....

Traffic and Pedestrians on Leopold Road

Our family lives on Dora Road. Since moving here we have realised, through conversations with neighbours and local friends, that Leopold Road has always been a dangerous road for pedestrians and traffic and it shows no signs of improving.

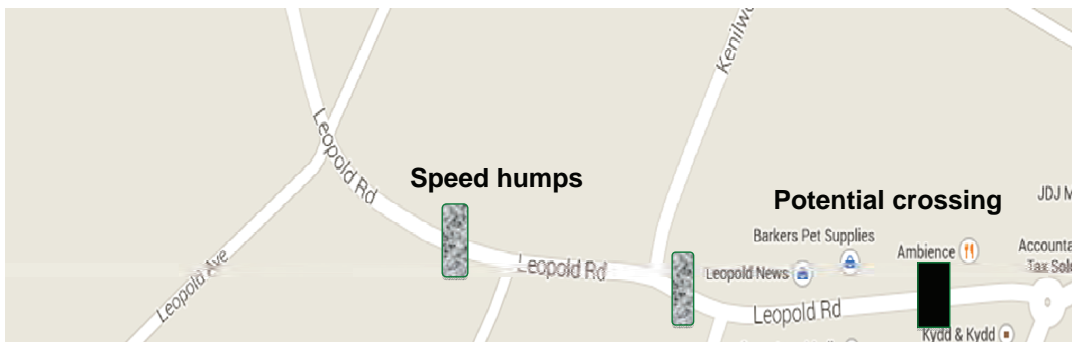
The speed of traffic makes it extremely difficult for cars, motorcycles and bicycles to join Leopold Road safely from the side roads. In some cases it is necessary to pull right out into Leopold Road before any approaching traffic can be seen, allowing very little reaction time for either party. There is an existing speed hump near Dora Road but it is not high enough to make an impact on the traffic speed. It is very difficult to cross the road safely on foot at any point other than at the single pedestrian crossing towards the top of Leopold Road near Ricards Lodge School.

We contacted Merton Council and spoke to the Traffic and Highways Section. We were advised that in order for the Council to investigate the feasibility of adding a pedestrian crossing we should collect signatures from other local residents who shared our views.

For this reason we decided to take the initiative to raise awareness about the speed of traffic on Leopold Road and the dangers in crossing the road there. We posted forms through approximately 400 local houses with a request to sign a petition form highlighting the need for a pedestrian crossing. We were fortunate enough to have the support of many local businesses on Leopold Road: Robert & Edwards Butcher, Brian Kirkby Florist, Freshway Food Store, Halliday's Home and Hardware, Aromatica Delicatessen and others.

The shopkeepers are happy to collect your signatures, so if you would like to support this petition to add a pedestrian crossing on Leopold Road and slow the traffic down generally, perhaps with the addition of some new speed humps, please sign the petition and hand it in to the aforementioned Leopold Road traders. If you have read this article but do not have a petition form to sign please visit the shops on Leopold Road, who will provide you with a blank copy. You can also download a copy from: <http://tiny.cc/8pgidx>

More supporters for this safety petition make it more likely that Merton Council will act. Please support us. The Franzini Family



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Redevelopment of the Greyhound Stadium

to a 20,000 seat Football Stadium?

A Response

The article in the Christmas 2013 Newsletter is considered by some to be biased against the return of AFC Wimbledon to the Borough, to a site close to the original Football Ground at Plough Lane. This response is meant to answer some of the problems raised in the article. Initially, the first paragraph shows the proposals from both sides:-

AFC Wimbledon	Greyhound Stadium
11,000 capacity stadium with the potential to extend to 20,000	4,500 capacity stadium with 120 parking spaces for trainers
Coach Parking	Squash and Fitness Centre
600 residential units with basement parking	450 space multi-story car park
Squash and Fitness Centre	400 residential units
1,000sqm retail unit	3,500sqm retail store plus 336 car parking spaces

Stadium – ‘*A 20,000 seat stadium.*’ AFC Wimbledon’s proposal is for an 11,000 seat stadium initially, with the possibility of extending to 20,000. Without success in the League Wimbledon may not reach the need for a 20,000 seat stadium.

Flooding – ‘*The area is at high risk of flooding.*’ Whilst I understand that the area did flood during the recent flooding problems, was it a greater problem than that suffered by Surrey or the Somerset Levels? With the Wandle so close I am sure the excess water could be pumped into this river. It is accepted that the Greyhound Stadium proposal deals with flooding better.

Transport. ‘*The site is universally acknowledged to have poor access by public transport.*’ In fact there are two rail stations, Earlsfield with trains every 3-4 minutes and Haydons Road, the closest, but with infrequent trains. In addition there are two Underground stations on two lines and four bus routes (156, 77, 44 and 220). This could hardly be described as ‘poor access’ when compared with some. When talking approximate distances Haydons Road is 0.6m, Wimbledon Park 1.1m, Earlsfield 0.9m and Tooting Broadway 0.8m.

Wimbledon Town Centre – The assertion that Wimbledon Town Centre would be ‘*blighted*’ if the Football proposal was given the go ahead is unfounded. What is possible is that there may be a lot more people passing through Wimbledon Station on match days.

Crime – The assertion in the recent UKIP leaflet that at the 2013 WPRA Annual General Meeting the Metropolitan Police suggested that ‘*crime would rise*’ does not appear in the Minutes for this meeting.

The report of the Independent Planning Inspector will be completed in April and will then go the Mayor for final approval. You may wish to make your views known to the Mayor (Boris Johnson) on either proposal prior to him making his final decision. You can, of course, send your views to me.

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**A game of fantasy football is about to turn into a nightmare for local residents
(letter from a Resident)**

Since joining the Wimbledon Park Residents Association (WPRa) my eyes have been opened to the fact that local residents in Haydons Road, Kohat Road, Regent Place, Durnsford Road, Cromwell Road and Plough Lane have been deliberately kept in the dark about plans to build a 20,000 seat stadium on their doorstep. In fact so has the rest of Wimbledon Park Ward.

More worryingly, there has not been the level of consultation and engagement that you would have expected to take place with those who stand to be most affected by such a development.

A couple of months ago, I helped some other members of the WPRa conduct a survey in our area. It was clear that no resident in the area surveyed had any knowledge of any consultation by Merton Council about the proposals for the Greyhound Stadium.

Whilst acknowledging that AFC supporters will be keen to have their own football stadium, the feasibility of such a development on the current greyhound site and the impact it would have on the lives of those living in its vicinity is being pushed to one side.

This hardening of attitude stems partly as a result of property developer Galliard Homes supporting the AFC Wimbledon bid.

Their proposal, if delivered, would be a nightmare for everyone living in the vicinity. The loudest voices in the war of words, that's currently being fought in the media, in the corridors of Merton Council and at City Hall are largely those who live nowhere near the stadium and could care less about the impact on local residents.

Many residents aren't aware of the proposals or the gravity of the situation. The Leaders of Merton Council and our elected Local Councillors led by Oonagh Moulton are locked in a perverse game of fantasy football where the prize is building a spanking new football stadium on Plough Lane in the vain hope that this will curry favour with the electorate in the run up to the local elections this year.

Our Councillors claim to be neutral on the question of what sport should occupy the site. But at every twist and turn they have indulged in obfuscation over their own intentions. It's now high time the voices of local residents and their strength of feeling are communicated to the landowners of Plough Lane stadium, Merton Council and the local Councillors.

Under the Freedom of Information Act some determined local residents managed to extract, from Merton Council, a study they commissioned in 1996. The study concluded that a 20,000 seater stadium was not feasible for a variety of reasons including the fact that it was on a floodplain and had a poor transport rating. But in a game of fantasy football, these are minor inconveniences to those who want football to return to Plough Lane.

This is no time to be apathetic. The threat is real. Don't take my word for it. Talk to those residents who lived through the years when Wimbledon FC was at Plough Lane and what impact that had on their quality of life.

If you want to make views heard contact me at ardi@kolah.com and 0208 542 8786.

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The Prospect of a 20,000 Seater Football Stadium at Plough Lane (a Letter from a Resident)

As a resident of Kohat Road for the past 37 years, I clearly recall the days when Wimbledon FC played at Plough Lane many years ago.

Hordes of Wimbledon FC and Away fans poured out of Haydons Road Station, making their way down side streets to reach the ground. On their way there, several fans were observed pouring beer over cars whilst singing loudly and urinating in alley ways, sometimes even at the side of the road in full view of passers by.

I always kept my children indoors on match days. Some local shop owners simply closed and shuttered their shops for fear of theft and vandalism.

Wimbledon and Wimbledon Park Stations were also popular stations with fans. Residents in roads down towards the stadium like Alexandra, Strathearn Road and Queens Road received a similar treatment. Some had their front garden gates ripped off. Match days were feared, particularly as certain away teams were known for their hooliganism.

Police were present mainly near the ground itself, so side streets and streets further away were usually left unprotected. ALL ROADS to and from public transport stations were affected. Traffic was terrible and cars were 'double parked' in residential roads. When local residents called the police because they couldn't get their own cars out, they were told that no officers were available as they all were at the ground.

Although by now most of the area is covered by CPZ, most of these zones will have to have 7 day parking till late, which will mean that 'every resident' will have to pay extra if they expect visitors at times which have up until now been free.

Just in case some of you think this will ONLY be the case once or twice a week BEWARE: Wimbledon FC have already announced that, if they are allowed to build their 20,000 seater stadium they will share with ANOTHER CLUB, which means Double Trouble! There is also the possibility of staging pop concerts as they will have to make a 20,000 seater stadium pay. Leaving it empty is not an option!

Sadly, our Tory Councillors seem to be supporting the football proposal. I am disheartened by Cllr. Oonagh Moulton's reported statement: "As councillors for Wimbledon Park Ward my colleagues and I are delighted to hear that AFC Wimbledon are seeking to return to the Borough and to Plough Lane, which is within our ward and the spiritual home of football in Merton".

Strangely enough nothing is said about the loss of the only Greyhound Stadium left in London which has existed long before Wimbledon FC, so this 'spiritual' home nonsense really doesn't make sense. I am also surprised that our Councillors don't realise that 600 homes and a 20,000 seater stadium don't belong on a floodplain!

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Bridge comes with a health warning: you might become hooked and end up spending sunny summer days poring over the cards when you could be out jogging on the Common or walking the dog. But it provides a fairly tough mental workout that keeps your synapses synapsing, or whatever it is they do. In the internet age you can play bridge online and if you want to see a game in progress, you can watch games from all over the world on 'Bridge Base' (you'll need to register but it's free). Watching others play can be a bit dry, but you will get an idea of what happens. Playing online is a bit nerdy, though, because Bridge is also a social game – you will meet lots of like-minded individuals engaged in friendly competition.

If you are going to the Wimbledon Fair in June, you'll find us there sheltering from the rain in one of the marquees, so why not drop by and have a chat? Or contact the club (details at <http://www.wimbledonbridgeclub.co.uk/>) and speak to the manager, Louisa, who can give you more information.

Phab disco—what is it??

Opening Days: Friday, School holidays, School term time

Opening Times: Every fortnight from 7pm to 9pm from 14 March 2014. The club will run through the holidays (except for the Summer of 2014)

Notes: Phab operates a members only club, so parents will need to make contact before they come along. Young people can have a trial before they make a decision to become members. (Membership is just £12.50 per year)

Description: A disco club in Wimbledon for children living in Merton - with or without disabilities. Phab's aim is to promote and encourage people of all abilities to come together on equal terms, to achieve complete inclusion within the wider community.

Location: Wimbledon Park Primary School, Havana Road, Wimbledon Park, SW19 8EJ

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The team is still required to make dates and times available for residents to come and see us. These are called ward surgeries. The dates and times are advertised on the team webpage which can be accessed via the Metropolitan Police official website then following the links to the neighbourhood teams. Select Merton, then Wimbledon Park. Of course we are always contactable when we are on duty and find that most people will either phone or e-mail us if they need advice or assistance.

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