

Osman, Louis

From: Leonie Noble [REDACTED]
Sent: 27 February 2022 17:13
To: PlanningPolicy Wandsworth
Subject: Wandsworth Local Plan Consultation Feb 2022

Ref: Proposals for Balham

I have read the proposals for Balham (where I have lived for twelve years) and studied the interactive maps. Regarding the development of Sainsbury's car park I would like to make the following comments:-

Layout

The map appears to show a wall of new buildings around most of the site perimeter with a "communal space" in the centre, - the buildings allocated to be up to a height of 21M or seven stories. This is considerably higher than the terraces in Bedford Hill that face the car park, which are only three stories and benefit from a very open and light aspect at present. It is higher than the supermarket building and without seeing any details appears to be over scale in the context of the existing street space, which is not like the high road, but a zone of more modest terraces. It would not be good to overshadow them.

There is already a popular communal space on the North East side of the car park that is well used and includes the rear entrance to the supermarket. Will this be retained? The concept of a larger communal open space is welcome and could be a real asset to this area of the centre if handled well. I am not sure whether this is in the form of a garden square or aiming to be a repetition of Hildreth Street.

Parking

I cannot see any reference to what happens to people who need to use a car for shopping - there will have to be some car parking space still retained for shoppers otherwise the surrounding streets will be even more overburdened with parked vehicles than they are already.

Trees and pollution

There are 27 trees on the car park site, with shrubs and hedges on the perimeter, including towards the centre of the space 4 large mature trees and two smaller ones that form a specific and valuable group. All the trees have good canopies when in leaf and provide invaluable carbon sequestration and anti pollution qualities for this area of Balham which suffers from increasingly heavy traffic on the high road and Bedford Hill and Station Road. Balham High road between the station and Old Devonshire Road road is poor in mature trees - apart from Waitrose car park that has three on the street frontage there are only two in Hildreth Street (semi mature) and two new saplings at the newly paved section of Bedford Hill. The high road itself has too many services in the pavements to introduce new street trees, which makes the existing mature trees highly valuable and they should be protected in any development, in line with Wandsworth Council's Tree Policy, Trees and Development item 20.

Density

My experience of the area over the last few years is that the population has increased to the extent that the high road around the shops can be uncomfortably crowded at times; the station, both underground and overground, also gets overcrowded (certainly pre pandemic) at peak times. The local streets are solidly parked up to the extent that now, with increased delivery vans everywhere, exits like Harberson Road to Bedford Hill are regularly choked by SUVs etc getting jammed trying to pass where the new road arrangement/paving has taken place. There is a problem with rubbish disposal for many residents as exhibited by the endless dumping of bags on street corners at night. Thames water is digging up every street round here because of the failing old pipe systems now having to deal with increased loads from multiple new bathrooms and kitchens.

The question is--when is saturation point reached? At what point does increasing the density put too much pressure on the infrastructure and start to damage the quality of an area. Does central Balham really need a large new block of flats right in its heart where at present there is an open zone that provides a resting space beyond the hurly burly of the high road, which could be developed into something really attractive and pleasant for the community to use

while retaining the trees and an element of parking for the supermarket. Anything built would best be low-mid rise and as carbon neutral as possible.

To cite an example of successful town planning dealing with an open area bounded by busy streets and part of a bus terminus it is worth looking at Clapham Old Town and the way the North Street/Polygon area has been developed , landscaped and planted.It now makes an attractive entrance to Clapham from the North side,while maintaining the character and scale of "place" as well as being functional for the buses.

Leonie Noble

