

Chairman's Report

Wineyard Hill Road Surgery

A great deal of ground has been covered since our last newsletter commented on the declared closure of the surgery at the end of March 2015. As many of you are now aware, the surgery will continue after all and with new doctors taking over from Drs Jones and Provost who are retiring. The combined forces of the Residents' Association, Stephen Hammond MP and our local Councillors, Donagh Moulton, Janice Howard and Linda Taylor, proved persuasive and managed to convince NHS England that there was another alternative to the ones they had put to patients by letter and subsequently at the November 4th meeting last year.

In particular I would like to thank Paresh Modasia for his unstinting efforts on behalf of the community to ensure continuation of the surgery. Also Nigel Israel for his, always, sane and sensible advice.

You will find an article on Pages 22 & 23 which provides more background and information on the new doctors.

Greyhound stadium redevelopment

As you know the planning application was submitted in December, providing very limited time for residents, or anyone else for that matter, to respond to the huge amount of supporting paperwork. Fortunately due to the efforts of our local Councillors, common sense prevailed with the Council who recognised that much more time was needed for people to respond and the deadline was extended twice before closing in early February.

I would like to commend both Peter West and Michael Tyler of our committee who have done a huge amount of work to evaluate the application and construct our response. Details of our response are, as you know, on our website.

There have been other very important responses from significant bodies including Wandsworth Council who have objected to the scheme. In fact several thousand submissions have since been lodged with Merton Borough Council. They include a 15,000-signature petition from animal rights charity PETA which says it supports the AFCW proposal, provided it means the end of greyhound racing in Wimbledon. Several thousand emails have also been received from AFCW supporters from as far afield as Hawaii, Russia, Australia and South Africa, as well as local supporters, following a campaign by the club to rally backing from its own fans and the football community generally.

Hundreds of residents from Wimbledon and Earlsfield have also registered their objections to the plans as they currently stand, citing worries about the size of the development, its traffic and transport implications, flooding issues and lack of infrastructure planning.

Statutory bodies have responded to the application as follows:

Greater London Authority: The Mayor of London's Office says the AFCW/Galliard Homes scheme for Plough Lane contravenes the London Plan on numerous

grounds including lack of provision of play space for children, over-dense housing, accessibility problems, its 'isolated' position amid commercial developments, and poor transport provision.

The Environment Agency: Objects to the application, saying that it fails to demonstrate that surface water can be managed, prove that it won't increase flood risk in the surrounding area; show that it helps reduce flood risk on the site (most of which is a highest risk category flood plain); indicate that sufficient flood storage compensation is provided in the development.

Transport for London: Points out that public transport services to the site are limited, cycle parking provision is insufficient, taxi drop-off points are missing, there is no coach management plan for drop-off/pick-up of away fans, travel data for match-day impact is inadequate and public transport assessment is incomplete.

NHS England: Rejects the application for failing to consult with local healthcare bodies over the demands of an increased population in the area, claiming to have carried out consultations with an organisation that doesn't actually exist, and using inaccurate GP ratio/population assumptions.

Sport England: Objects to the application because it fails to provide sufficient sporting facilities for residents of the proposed high-density housing development or the wider local community.

Neighbouring Wandsworth Borough Council has also officially objected to the application because in its current form it fails to properly address and resolve detrimental effects on local infrastructure, as well as the issues raised by statutory bodies listed above.

Companies based at the Riverside Business Park, located just behind the stadium on Riverside Road, have also registered their opposition, complaining that the applicants have failed to consult them on traffic and parking issues, which they deem inadequate in the current planning application. Wimbledon Art Studios, the large complex bordering the Plough Lane site, protests that the development plans would ruin them commercially for similar reasons, and Christophers Squash and Fitness Club says that AFCW/Galliard Homes' failure to provide parking for its visitors to the club would make it impossible to continue operating.

It has been suggested that reducing the amount of housing on the site would help alleviate many of these problems (parking, flooding, pressures on infrastructure etc). It remains to be seen whether Galliard Homes, which of course wants to maximise profitability of the site, is prepared to scale down its plans in order for AFC Wimbledon to get its stadium.

The applicants have gone away to fine-tune their application which, due to its complexity, looks unlikely to go before Merton's planning committee before the General Election on May 7.

The question is, will any changes to the application be enough to persuade Merton councillors to approve the flawed application as it stands, or will they take the Wandsworth approach and reject it due to local and statutory objections to its deficiencies? *Iain Simpson*

A report from our MP Stephen Hammond

Vineyard Hill Road Surgery

Many local residents received a shock last October when they received a letter from NHS England that the Vineyard Hill Road Surgery was closing down. We were informed that after many years of dedicated service to the local community Drs Jones and Provost wished to retire and the options were find another site for a surgery in Wimbledon Park or register elsewhere. There were obvious problems with these solutions; why couldn't medical provision continue on the Vineyard Hill Road site? Many of the alternative surgeries were much further away than suggested in the letter and it was not clear that a list of over 5000 patients could easily be absorbed.

Together with WPPRA and local Councillors Oonagh Moulton, Janice Howard and Linda Taylor, we arranged a public meeting to express local views to NHS England. A packed and heated meeting forcibly made points to NHS England stressing the value of a local surgery and raising issues with how the consultation was being handled. The response was disappointing as NHS England believed the current building unfit for modern requirements and there was not adequate alternative provision in the surrounding areas.

So on several early mornings in the period from November to January, a small group consisting of Iain Simpson, Parash Modasia, Nigel Israel, Clr Moulton and me could be seen in Arhurs in Intense, and sometime tense discussion. Several options were explored including new sites, mergers and a new practice partnership.

After several weeks of rumours, it was possible to confirm that the existing partners had withdrawn their notice to terminate and wished to form a new practice partnership. The new GP partnership will continue to provide future provision of primary care, modernise the building and has some ambitious plans for new services. I hope that Dr Jeremy Harris, who runs surgeries elsewhere and has outlined his long term plans for the surgery, will be a great success. The news that GP services are still to be provided and serve the community is a real victory.

I know everyone in the local community will want to wish Drs Jones and Provost a long and happy retirement.

The Stadium

This redevelopment is causing great local concern with hugely differing views. I have worked with WPPRA to ensure their concerns are heard. I have met both Paschal Taggart and AFC/Galliard to discuss their plans and the impact on the local community. It is clear that both applications have issues and problems.

I think the impact on the local community and on the social infrastructure must be resolved before any application can be passed. The AFC /Galliard application has

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proposed 603 units be built, some of which will be two and three bedroom. There is therefore likely to be pressure on local schools, local health and other local services. The Gap Rd/Haydons Rd junction is already regarded as one of the busiest in Merton and the extra development associated with the application would only mean that this junction would come under further strain. Moreover the pressure on local parking both on match days and throughout the year will be increased.

There are a number of issues that need to be resolved about the flooding risk. I have met Peter West and we have both written to the Environment Agency to seek reassurance about their classification of the site and what calculations they intend to undertake. As yet their response has been of a holding nature.

Like many people I am keen to see AFC back in the borough but not at the expense of local residents. The planning application will not be heard before May at the earliest but is also likely to be called in by the Mayor. Watch this space.

Vision for Wimbledon

Last Autumn I launched a Vision for Wimbledon which looked at not only what we need to do in the Town Centre but also in Raynes Park, Morden, the Village and Wimbledon Park. I believe vibrant local shopping areas and community places are vital to local communities.

If you have any ideas to improve Wimbledon Park, please email me on hammonds@parliament.uk

District Line

Many of us in Wimbledon Park rely on the District Line for our daily commute. In the last few years TfL have spruced up the station, taken some remedial action over the embankments and introduced new trains. All of this is very welcome. However there are still several important improvements and upgrades we need over the next few years. Firstly the performance of the line should be significantly improved when the sub surface signalling contract is not only awarded but started. I expect this to start by 2017 at the latest.

The new S stock trains are modern and can take up to 25% more people. They have been a great success on the Edgware Road branch. I want to see more of them on the City branch and shall be campaigning for this. Finally, whilst not their fault, it is time TfL put pressure on Network Rail Signal Centre at Wimbledon to get the indicator boards correct. I hope this will be resolved soon.

However one of the great pleasures of travelling through Wimbledon Park is the station staff, who are always helpful and cheerful. Many Thanks!

Finally, it has been an honour and privilege to serve you as your MP for the last ten years. I hope to be returned but whatever happens – thank you for your support.

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