

Your historic parkland – what are your views?



The All England Lawn Tennis Club (AELTC) has now submitted its planning applications to the London Boroughs of Merton and Wandsworth for planning consent to develop the Wimbledon Park Golf Course area, outlined in red above. This project will transform the historic parkland originally designed by Capability Brown to include 38 new courts and an 8,000-seat stadium together with 10 ancillary buildings. The build is expected to take eight years and, when completed, will bring an estimated 190,000 more spectators to the annual tournament, including the qualifying event which will relocate from Roehampton.

The planning applications can be found at: www.merton.gov.uk/planning . Application number 21/P2900 and www.wandsworth.gov.uk/planning-and-building-control/ . Application number 2021/3609

Your local Residents Associations, representing 10,000 households, would like to highlight some of the issues this will raise (overleaf). These may help you form your own opinion and inspire you to make your own response to the planning applications.

These are some of the issues which have been raised

- The 8,000-seat stadium will have a full range of facilities including a hospitality area, restaurants and storage. At almost 30m high it will be similar in size to a 10-storey apartment block. It will dominate and block views across the open space of the historic parkland which has protected status as Metropolitan Open Land (i.e., urban Green Belt) where national planning policies usually prohibit such development. This is inappropriate; as is the 'outline permission sought'. Full details need to be provided in their application.
- The environmental impact due to the scale of the project is vast. Each of the 38 courts, stadium and 10 ancillary buildings require large concrete foundations. The stadium will be mostly concrete. The structures and connecting access roads will be unused for most of the year, yet will infill and level a substantial proportion of attractive protected parkland requiring the removal of several hundred mature trees. Many of the promised tree replacements are younger specimens which will take decades to replicate the carbon capture which the "lost" trees currently provide. Apart from traffic and construction noise, there are long-term environmental concerns over drainage, biodiversity, energy and impacts on the use of the lake and park. This density is excessive.
- The density of courts also leaves little open space to support Championship infrastructure such as 'The Queue' and spectator parking. The proposals assume these will continue to be provided in the existing Public Park. Why should the community lose access to its valuable outdoor space when the AELTC now has its own land for these facilities?
- There is an assumption that Church Road will continue to be closed for the championships period to the public, creating a vast single tennis venue. There are alternatives, such as bridges.
- Public access to a section of the parkland is welcome but is described as "permissive" so could be withdrawn at any time, e.g. to make way for more facilities to support future expansion. The dedication of this public access must be permanently safeguarded e.g. through a community trust.
- The proposed public walkway around the Lake is an attractive prospect but is in fact a longstanding obligation that the club entered into, in the form of a covenant, when they bought the park from public ownership. The same covenant also prohibits the development of the land.
- Many of the "Community Benefits" offered with the application are vague and unquantified. Full details, backed by suitable undertakings, should be provided.

This is your community, so have your say. If you have concerns about even just one aspect of the AELTC plans, let Merton and Wandsworth Councils (ideally both) know. Either use the online forms on the planning application pages (addresses overleaf) or email your concerns to planning.representations@merton.gov.uk and planning@wandsworth.gov.uk

Please remember to state the application reference numbers (overleaf) and your name and address – without these your comments will not be valid. **The closing date for comments to the consultation is the 16th September.** You can also copy your comments to your RA below if you wish, so that they can note the responses which may not appear on the Council website.