



## SAVE WIMBLEDON PARK RESPONSE (Jan '24) TO AELTC CHRISTMAS 2023 UPDATE

Dear Planning at GLA, Wandsworth and Merton,

We wish to highlight the fact that residents in Wandsworth and Merton are receiving flyers from the AELTC which contain different information from that which is in the actual planning applications 2021/3609 and 21/P2900. Delivery of these leaflets commenced after the planning application had been lodged in July 2021. Before the application, residents had never heard from the AELTC about their proposals.

You will note in the latest flyer (attached) which we received on Christmas Eve that several statements and promises are made and we will outline where these differ from the actual current planning application.

1. AELTC description - "The new public parkland ....will provide permanent access to 23 acres of green space that was formerly inaccessible ....."

In the Planning application this parkland is described as "permissive use only". This was confirmed at both Planning Committee meetings and on many occasions verbally by the AELTC. "Permissive" means that the public will have access by permission only, which can be withdrawn at any time. "Permanent" access cannot be guaranteed, as the proposed s106 agreement can be overturned on application. The only way to achieve the claimed "permanence" would be to take the land out of the control of the developer, for example into a community trust. In addition, the Wandsworth Planning Officer's presentation at the Wandsworth Planning Committee meeting in November 20232 noted that the permissive park area is not 23 but in fact 17 acres, as one has to discount the **Inaccessible** Nature Reserve, the 30,000 sq ft maintenance hub, the car park and the former Golf Club House.

Also, the former Golf Club was not "inaccessible". Any (non golf club member) Merton resident could either phone up or visit the Club House and book a round of golf at a reduced green fee rate. 75% of all golf club members had to be Merton residents. [https://web.archive.org/web/20171004232335/http://www.wpgc.co.uk/green\\_fees](https://web.archive.org/web/20171004232335/http://www.wpgc.co.uk/green_fees)

2. "...creating a boardwalk around the entire Wimbledon Park Lake". The boardwalk shown in the proposed plans is within and across the lake, greatly reducing the area for sailing in particular, and creating environmental harm. There

is already an existing obligation under the 1993 legally binding covenants to provide a walkway AROUND the entire lake as shown on the 1993 plans. The developer's proposed plans show tennis courts right up to the lake edge, where the public walkway should be. The boardwalk is also permissive access only, with all the problems of the developer's potential avoidance of this obligation mentioned above, whereas the walkway right around the lake should be permanently open to the public ("dedicated", as per the covenants).

3. "...planting 1,500 new trees and significantly boosting biodiversity." There is no mention of the fact that the developer plans to fell 300 mature trees and at least 500 slightly smaller trees. Only 50% of the existing trees and hedgerows in Wimbledon Park were surveyed by the developer for their plans. Planting 1,500 mostly saplings in no way compensates for the release of 800,000 KG3 of carbon and the fact that it will take decades to replicate the canopy cover lost with mature carbon-capturing trees. Merton and Wandsworth have both declared a Climate Emergency and in the past few weeks we can see how devastating our warmer wetter winters are with severe flooding in areas of London and the UK. Events that are meant to be every 50 or 100 years are now happening annually. Keeping mature trees in the ground and protecting the Green Belt has never been so needed and important.

Re: Biodiversity - there has been much discussion about this and the Save Wimbledon Park Campaign group expert, Dr Dave Dawson, the eminent environmental scientist, who has also studied Wimbledon Park for almost 40 years, has calculated that there will be a **net loss of 30% bringing the Urban Greening Factor down from 0.99 to 0.70%. Dr Dawson is the former joint head of GLA Environment Strategy responsible for Biodiversity, Air & Noise** as well as developing the London Hierarchy of Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation. (SWP have a very factual 30 minute presentation with slides on the Environment and Air Quality and we'd be delighted to present this to you at a time, date and location of your choosing).

4. "If our plan is approved, it will create hundreds of additional jobs and opportunities for the small businesses that make our community so special." The actual permanent jobs created by this project (again corroborated in the Wandsworth Planning Officer's presentation) is 40. So an entire 70+ acres of Urban Green Belt MOL, Grade II\* Heritage Registered Park and Garden, Capability Brown Landscape could be dug up along with 100's of mature trees felled - all for 40 extra jobs... largely for a 4 day qualifying tournament which is currently hosted at The Bank of England site in Roehampton. The qualifying tournament jobs from Roehampton simply transfer to Wimbledon so there is no employment uplift from that, and jobs have been lost at the previous golf club.

4a. Members of SWP went to the 2023 qualifying tournament at Roehampton and were extremely impressed by the experience. The Bank of England site is a long

established Sports venue, easy to reach by public transport and the AELTC has already made a substantial and well-received investment to enhance the facilities and amenities for players and visitors alike. The players' warming-up area and pavilion are generous, temporary seating for spectators is plentiful and the public food and beverage areas are extensively branded to enhance the connection with the Wimbledon Championships. It serves its purpose as a prelude to the Championships most effectively. (However, it is also worth noting that unlike the AELTC's plans for the courts in Wimbledon Park, at Roehampton, post Qualifying, the AELTC make the courts available [subject only to ongoing maintenance requirements] on a book and play basis to members of the public for the remainder of the grass court season.) The Bank of England site is anything but "a cricket outfield", as it has been so disingenuously described by Ms Jevans.

5. Re the small businesses in Wimbledon, Southfields, Leopold Road and Wimbledon Town Centre. There is no doubt that during Wimbledon there is an extra buzz but with play sometimes starting at 11.30am and finishing at 10.45pm, once the crowd is in the All England Club watching the tennis, the rest of the area is dead. The regulars who visit Wimbledon avoid it during "Wimbledon Fortnight" and will do the same if it was "Wimbledon 3 weeks" so the small businesses actually lose out hugely. Restaurants and bars of course do well but with play finishing at 10.45pm on several occasions in 2023, there were many late cancellations for dinner, so they didn't actually do as well as anticipated. The likely financial beneficiary will be the private members of the AELTC.

5a. Spectators are directed from Southfields straight to the tennis and this year it was particularly busy and uncomfortable. Barriers kettle the crowds in and there's no way to cross the road if you happen to see a shop you fancy, so once again the small businesses lose out.

5b. From Wimbledon Town Centre crowds are directed the quickest way to the courts (by google maps but also previously via AELTC maps on the rear of tickets) thus walking via residential roads and avoiding the Village and its retail outlets. Otherwise many chose Park & Ride or pay for a special bus/taxi straight to AELTC. Again, this is a loss to local businesses but a gain for the AELTC as spectators are encouraged to go straight to the courts and spend their money within the grounds.

6. Economic benefit - The Save Wimbledon Park campaign group have written a detailed paper on this already but suffice to say that those attending the £15 pp Qualifying Tournament are unlikely to spend the same amount as those buying Debenture tickets and enjoying lunch with wine and champagne during Wimbledon Fortnight. Every Grand Slam tournament has a finite length and number of players so we believe that the projected annual benefit to London and the UK is vastly overstated.

7. Alternatives for the 4 day stand-alone qualifying tournament have not been explored by the AELTC and it would appear that the chance to “Level Up” across the country has been missed. There are fantastic grass courts in Raynes Park, Surbiton, Nottingham, Birmingham, Eastbourne and Ilkley, to name a few, as well as elsewhere throughout the UK. We’re sure that other areas of the UK would welcome and benefit from some Wimbledon money & magic. In fact there used to be two qualifying tournaments for Wimbledon - one held in the South of England and one in the North.

8. On the AELTC flyer they state over **1900 letters of support** from the local community. Data on number of objections and support is in the Planning Officers Wandsworth Report. The figures include both Merton and Wandsworth and the number of **objection letters is 2168**, plus the **14,122 SWP petition** at time of report being written **plus** third party petition of **2046 signatures**. The Save Wimbledon Park petition is currently at 16,797 (15.1.24)

The number of **letters of support total 83**.

The report does refer to the 1479 template letters (containing some misinformation as highlighted above) submitted by the AELTC. It should be clarified that these signatures were collected by PR & lobbying company Thorncliffe/Your Shout (formerly Indigo Public Affairs), paid for by the AELTC.

8a. Very few local residents who are receiving these flyers will have read the entirety of the 182 documents (some of which are 600 pages long) placed on the Merton and Wandsworth planning websites in 3 separate tranches (without any track changes). It is therefore imperative that any synopsis of the planning application is entirely accurate, whether it comes from a Residents’ Association, the Wimbledon Society, Save Wimbledon Park or the AELTC. We believe that the attached flyer contains inaccurate information, unless of course there have been recent changes to the original planning application.

We thought that you should all be aware of this situation as **10s of thousands of local residents have received this and previous flyers**. They will be most affected by the decade long building phase, poor air quality, loss of urban green space etc etc. but may be misinformed as to much of the detail.

Many thanks for your attention to the important matters raised in this letter. Please add this as an objection onto your respective websites.

Kind regards,

Save Wimbledon Park Campaign Group  
(Address redacted)