

Wimbledon Park Residents' Association
Minutes of the Annual General Meeting
held on 18th January, 2022 at 8 pm
in Wimbledon Park Hall, Arthur Road, SW19

Committee:	Iain Simpson (Chair)	Beate Eberhardt
	Nigel Israel (Treasurer)	Mamoona Jahangir
	Pamela Healy	Peter West
	Paresh Modasia	Spike Clarke

Ex Officio: Cllr Janice Howard, Cllr Oonagh Moulton, Cllr Ed Gretton

1. Minutes of the AGM held on 8th October, 2019

There was no AGM last year.

2. Matters Arising

These will be covered in today's meeting.

3. Chairman's Report

Iain had not prepared a written report, as issues will be part of this meeting.

4. Planning/Property Development – Pamela Healy

Iain praised Pam as a very hard-working member of the committee.

Footbridge: Wandsworth and Merton Councils have agreed funds, but there is discussion about linking the footbridge work with the Wandle Trail development. There are a number of parties involved, which has delayed getting them together. Pam asked Merton to decouple the bridge work from the Trail. There is currently no plan, as they are busy with the dam on the lake.

Wellington Industrial Estate: Goldcrest has made a fourth application to extend the workshop at the far end, which has been taken to the Planning Inspector; the problem is access from Dawlish Avenue and Wellington Road. The owner of the rest of the workshops has just put them up for sale. We wait to see if anybody is interested in buying this.

Mosque: A new planning application for a first floor extension with undercroft has been prepared. Councillors have asked Merton Council for an extension for residents to consider the application as it has been found that letters have not been received, due to possible disruption of mail deliveries in December/January. Ed Gretton and Stephen Hammond have complained about this to the Head of Royal Mail. Farouk on the Mosque's planning committee has asked to attend the next WPRA meeting.

Rufus Building: This is a planned development at the Earlsfield end of Durnsford Rec, for 96 flats over 2 to 8 storeys high. They also want to open up into the Rec from the site. Pam understands the Council will not allow this access, as the current two gates keep the Rec secure for users. The application has not yet been submitted.

Gap Road site of builders' merchant: it is not known what is happening with this site which is near Gap Road bridge and had been 'safe guarded' for Crossrail. Iain suggested we should get an answer from Government as to Crossrail plans.

Durnsford Rec: Pam applied for £32k funding from the Council's Community Infrastructure Levy to provide exercise equipment, including bikes, bench presses and cross trainers which have now been installed. In the next couple of weeks, they will also be planting three Swamp Cypress trees, under-planted with serviceberry shrubs near the site. Heavy pruning of the fruit hedge was carried out by a group of volunteers in the autumn. Repairs to fencing, and a wall damaged by lorry drivers, plus graffiti removal were carried out. Pam will apply this year for more funding once Merton outlines the criteria for funding. Iain added that WPRAs has acted as a 'Friend of Durnsford Rec'.

South London Waste Plan: Iain reported on the extensive work personally carried out by Peter West, who was unable to attend the AGM. He attended a meeting earlier in the year with the Inspectors who were in good listening mode. His complaint is the lack of a pollution plan and where the pollution sensors were placed; eg. to gauge pollution in Weir Road, the sensors were placed in The Broadway. Until the Inspectors publish their report, it is not known whether we will win the argument about where the sensors were placed. A video survey was carried out in Plough Lane/Gap Road, which showed 600 HGV movements every day.

Flower Boxes: these continue to be maintained by a group of volunteers.

Lift: finally, after Councillors campaigning since 2002, the station lift was installed in 2021.

Recycling centre: as we are no longer able to use the Wandsworth Recycling Centre, and Weir Road site was removed a few years ago, meaning a long drive to Garth Road, Merton's site, Councillors have requested that Wimbledon Park residents could pay per use at the Wandsworth site. Janice noted that they are pursuing this vigorously, but Wandsworth share a different waste partnership with Westminster and Lambeth, and discussions are on-going.

Pocket Park, Gap Road cross roads: this park has been in a bad state for years and Ed Gretton, together with a group of residents, started a project to replant the park. Ornamental grasses and some replacement hedging have been planted recently. This has been funded by the Council, with top-up funding from residents. Ed is trying to produce a Borough crest for the park.

Kenilworth Green: this is another project to come.

Haydons Road shopping parade: Ed has acquired a total of £800k funding from the Community Infrastructure Levy, to renovate the heritage brickwork on the buildings, followed by planting of some trees.

5. Treasurer's Report

Iain explained that Ivan Scott had been looking after the bookkeeping assiduously for many years, although Nigel is our official Treasurer, and casts his eye over the figures. Looking at Income, Nigel explained that the sum of £1,753 had been paid to the Association in error instead of the Wimbledon Park Community Trust. This had been repaid to the Trust, therefore actual expenditure was £3,940. There had been only two newsletters in the year, resulting in a deficit of £425. Iain explained that advertising in the newsletter had diminished, explaining why we had made a small loss. Balance sheet shows £7,789 in funds.

It was confirmed by WURA that they will be charging the subscription of £20 for the year.

John Bilsand queried the Dash Cam. Iain explained this is a monitor bought for the HGV movement survey, which had been placed in some residents' houses. It is available for other uses.

Q. regarding newsletter advertising rates: full page £110, half page £60, back and front inside cover £130.

Q. suggestion to go digital: Iain agreed this had been done by the Wimbledon Society, but they do not have advertising. Although there has been no survey, it is felt people prefer a booklet rather than reading 44 pages on screen, and the A5 size is handy for posting. We also deliver to 3,200 homes. Delivery is not restricted to WPRA members. Rosemary Connell thought a printed magazine more attractive to advertisers. Jill Farmer suggested that if we did not deliver a printed booklet, how would you attract new members? Iain said there were always a few new members following each delivery.

The accounts were accepted by the meeting, having been previously approved by the Committee.

Front Garden competition: Iain acknowledged Jill Farmer's contribution running the front garden awards, organising her teams of volunteers for so many years. She has now retired. If anyone would like to take this over, and continue to promote the benefit of green front gardens, he hoped Jill would give them her advice.

The Minutes of 8th October 2019 were corrected. It was Cécile Bridgens who started the front garden competition in 1990, and John Uden who presented the John Uden Cup.

6. Election of Officers

Spike Clarke is standing down and Iain thanked him for his tremendous support over the years, although he will still be actively helping with the flower boxes. Beata Eberhardt is also stepping down. Paresh asked us to remember the late Michael Moore who died last year. Iain praised the tremendous job he did looking after the flower boxes for many years. He was a great character and loved by a lot of people.

Those standing for election are: Iain Simpson (Chairman), Pamela Healy (Secretary), Nigel Israel (Treasurer), Paresh Modasia, Peter West, Mario Avendano, Christopher Coombe, Clive Daws. As there were no other appointees, they were duly elected.

A Membership Secretary is needed to 'do a proper job', keeping the records, and to encourage more members to join. At the moment, the role is being covered by Iain.

All England Lawn Tennis Club panel discussion

The Planning Application was lodged in July 2021. The AELTC held three Briefing sessions earlier in the year starting in March, giving a successive release of information; a rather cynical approach to consultation. Over the years, they have had a continuous building programme on the main site and always invited people to see what they were doing, and take on comments from local residents. The new regime decided not to do this, citing Covid as the reason. After the application was lodged, there has been an expanding effort to absorb the information. The Design and Access document is 600 pages and another is 1,200 pages. The Planning Officers in Merton Council will have a formidable task. We have a group of people belonging to residents' associations in the Wimbledon area and Wandsworth to cooperate and share information on various aspects of the application. A lot of activity has been generated. There have been around 1,200 letters of objection and 30 in support. (These can be seen on Wandsworth's website. Merton has not published the figures.) Objections are based on scale, the golf course Metropolitan Open Land (MOL), conservation area, Grade II* listed park; cynical and an attack on the policies that protect this land. We need to

protect such green space, particularly MOL being the urban equivalent to Green Belt; Planning Application and planning rules on the one side, National Planning framework (Government planning rules on building and MOL involving London Plan and Local Plan). The rules on what you can do are complex. The Council is the Planning Authority and also the Beneficiary of the covenants introduced in the Bill of Sale in 1993.

According to the WPRA archives, held by Iain, in 1993 John Uden put up a huge fight but eventually lost the battle. He and others realised the implication if this sale went through. The Council did introduce full protection to the land including those covenants. We are trying to say to the Council we want to be on the same side; i.e. protect the land, sold on the basis it will not be developed. The AELTC now says after 28 years times have changed and things are different. Iain introduced Christopher Coombe, a retired lawyer, who has done a huge amount of research and work for which we are extremely grateful, on a no liability basis; and Susan Cusack, Chair of Belvedere Estates RA. Together with the WPRA, Parkside RA, the Wimbledon Society, and Sofia Browning, Southfields Gardens RA, zoom meetings have been held every Monday for some months.

Paresh acknowledged the work of Timothy Ball, who designed the Heritage Trail, and Bernard Rondeau who worked alongside John Uden at the time.

Jill Hall questioned how watertight are the covenants? Why would AELTC put the money into developing this idea without some indication from the Council that the covenants could be overturned? Iain felt it was more than likely a discussion had taken place. However, it is not known how long they have been in discussion with the Council. We get the impression the AELTC think they are so important they can steam roller their way. Christopher thinks it is possible they have been discussing it. It is very odd that Merton have not sought to say anything to their rate payers. Ed assumes this probably did occur pre application stage, but would not be binding until the planning application is heard before committee. Janice suggested we ask for Freedom of Information, in order that any documents relating to any dialogue is released to us. Christopher thinks this would be very valuable as the Council is in a difficult position because they have a conflict. The Council owns the freehold of the public park and the lake; wearing three different hats, it is a massive, complex situation to manage. The planning decision will be taken independently of the covenants. Prospects of any success are unknown. However, the covenants on the land are strong, i.e. not to be used other than for leisure, recreation and open space, and not to build except etc.

Oxford football ground research: “not to use other than for recreation purposes”. The Judge threw the application out because putting football in front of spectators by a club is commercial activity and not recreation. How does development of building a 28m high, 8000 seater stadium not impair the view?

We have to:

1. Persuade the Council to take those arguments seriously as Trustee of the park.
2. Persuade the AELTC who signed the covenants to take this promise seriously. From the point of view of their reputation, the AELTC is not doing themselves any favours.

The archive has been fundamental; including minutes, letters written by the Council, and plenty of corporate knowledge in that archive.

Michael Allen: Q. are you really reliant on the Council actually pursuing these arguments in court to maintain the covenants or will we get a part as residents to have a say in those court proceedings? Christopher: there are situations in which residents would have a say; if the AELTC were to start building, the Council would have to do something about it. On a £100 million project we expect Merton discussed. We may have to take action. People have agreed to pay. We very much hope the Council sees sense.

John Boyd: Q. the Oxford case was resolved by a Judge. Christopher explained this was a property case not a planning issue. The Judge decided against a football stadium.

Christopher said that if Merton sat on their hands, we would have to take a part.

Helen Day asked if there are any other precedents for this type of planning application within the UK? Christopher noted that on any planning application people do not normally write in support. The objections are published on Wandsworth's website. Christopher – on precedents, precedent does not really work in planning terms. If the Council gets the process wrong the decision it takes may be overturned. Christopher quite sure a Council will be aware of any overstepping the mark. This is not our prime concern. The prime concern is the covenants and the promises, and are AELTC going to do what they said they would do. Christopher said there have been two meetings with AELTC. Our concerns about the land were repeated. The reaction in July was disbelief and the same in October that they want to remain the pinnacle of tennis. No explanation as to why decision to build on MOL. Iain – the attitude from AELTC frank exchange of views, quite clear they are not prepared to change their view on planning proposals. They are going to go the whole way to see what happens. We have been asked if we would compromise. We would if they are prepared to. However, it is their compromise which is needed.

If you plan to build on MOL, the rules require you to show substantial benefits, "very special circumstances". This is not something AELTC have done. The GLA has said they have yet to meet the standard of "special

circumstances”. We have asked what are these benefits? They are going to open up part of the golf course as a public park. It is a private park that is going to be opened up. It will remain in their ownership and they can withdraw this at any time. It is not a benefit. None of the 38 courts will be accessible to the public.

Susan Cusack – the private ‘permissive’ park will not be open at all during the championships; maybe three – four weeks.

Bill Wiffen: re. objections about planning? The covenants are made, so is there no pressure we can put on the Council about the covenants? Christopher thinks there is. Merton Council owns the public park and lake.

David Hurst: The Wimbledon Club turned AELTC down twice. Originally it was just 20 grass courts and now it is 38.

Caroline Lloyd? Q. as beneficiaries does that give us permission to bring a class action – ask them to enforce the promises made. Christopher: almost certain it does, but requires a lot of organisation and money if we do not get an answer from Merton soon. At the moment we are hoping Merton will be able to agree with us; i.e. we would be on the same side as the Council. Iain – through WimSoc in terms of negotiation with the Council we have asked them twice by letter what they are going to do. They have not answered. We are advised they are taking advice on the covenants. They are in a very difficult position, very conflicted. Might just refer to GLA.

Neil Keen: Do people know they are still able to object to the Council. Iain thought both Councils will accept objections up to when planning is discussed.

Juliet Boyd: has not yet written and had not received the pamphlet; asked if there is a template, in order that she can use the correct terminology. She was given the pamphlet and advised to write to both Merton and Wandsworth Councils quoting both planning applications, using her own words gained from the pamphlet and the ‘hand out’ this evening written by Fleur Anderson, Putney MP. Councils will receive letters up until the date of the planning meeting. It was felt this will be post the May election. It seems there are a number of people in Home Park Road right next to the golf course who only just realised what is to happen.

Susan Cusack mentioned the Twitter account “YouCannotBeSeriousSW19” (spelling?) doubled followers since it started. Each day we have been putting out a fact. Most tweets and notes are to do with environmental aspect of trees – 300 are going to be felled. So many of the others will not survive because their roots will be bulldozed.

Each tennis court will need 7,000 tons of concrete - 95% non organic. From an environmental and wild life point of view, and carbon capture, it is devastating. The AELTC are not listening to this aspect. There will be 8 years of utter devastation.

John Bilsand: what is the Council's environmental policy on carbon? Susan said Merton has declared a climate emergency but is not doing anything about it.

Iain – as far as the planning application is concerned we are looking at a political situation. There is a lot of money involved for the Council, which is another conflict area.

Iain – we are not aware whether the AELTC and Council have discussed the covenants. We are putting pressure on them.

At a meeting with Wandsworth and Fleur Andersen, it seems the planning application date will be post the May elections.

Kish Modasia asked if WPRA has email addresses in order to tap into other ways of getting information out. Iain only has email addresses for members.

David Hurst attended a 'smooze fest' at AELTC and queried 1,500 cars parking on the golf course every day – they could not answer. We will try and make it a car free event.

Nigel said they asked Merton Council to double the amount of cars allowed to park in the park.

Christopher noted the section between Home Park Road and the lake to be available to the public but not available during the championships.

ICS thanked everyone for coming. He thanked Christopher for the huge amount of work and research carried out, since he recently joined the association. Susan was thanked for her hard work on behalf of BERA.

Christopher gave an enormous 'thank you' to Iain and the whole committee.

Paresh asked for everyone to generate more members!

Meeting ended 10 pm.