1.0 Introduction

1.1 The issues to be addressed in this hearing statement is:

B. How will the masterplan approach to the designation of Colliers Wood as a district centre and definition of the AFI boundary embodied in Policy CS 1 deliver the outcomes the Council is seeking to achieve? What is the timetable for the preparation of the masterplan leading to its adoption in 2012? Why has a masterplan approach been selected in preference to an Area Action Plan?

2.0 B. How will the masterplan approach to the designation of Colliers Wood as a district centre and definition of the AFI boundary embodied in Policy CS 1 deliver the outcomes the Council is seeking to achieve? What is the timetable for the preparation of the masterplan leading to its adoption in 2012? Why has a masterplan approach been selected in preference to an Area Action Plan?

2.1 While the Core Strategy refers to a ‘masterplan’, this term is being used to indicate a plan-led approach to address existing issues in Colliers Wood such as layout, design, function (land use), pedestrian permeability, architectural quality and environmental quality. Merton will be producing a DPD for Colliers Wood; either in the form of an Area Action Plan (AAP) or as part of a borough-wide Site Allocations DPD supported by a masterplan for Colliers Wood. It is suggested that references in the Core Strategy to the Colliers Wood ‘masterplan’ are replaced with ‘DPD’ to avoid confusion.

2.2 Following responses made to issues A (i), (ii), (iii) & (iv) in the Retail and Town Centre Policy Statement and Merton’s extensive evidence base, Colliers Wood is already operating as a District Centre, and based on the existing retail floorspace and the range of retail offer the centre attracts is nearing that of a major centre role.

2.3 However qualitatively, Colliers Wood comprises a number of disconnected ‘island’ sites with a number of out-of-centre retail ‘shed’ developments and traditional local shopping parades. In its current layout, and the conflict between local shopping, and car-based retailing, Colliers Wood does not yet function as a coherent town centre and severely lacks any sense of place or coherent identity.

2.4 A plan-led approach offers a way of reconfiguring the existing retail floorspace (with some moderate growth) to transform Colliers Wood
from an out of town centre, to a coherent ‘place’. In particular, it will enable a comprehensive approach to flood risk mitigation, as most of central Colliers Wood is in the functional floodplain of the river Wandle (zone 3b). This approach is supported by the Mayor of London and the Environment Agency.

2.5 This plan-led approach will act as a guide for major sites and development opportunities and to provide a more coherent town centre with focal points; including the development of other town centre uses such as banks, services and facilities that Colliers Wood currently lacks to meet the day-to-day needs of residents. The intended outcome for the plan-led approach for Colliers Wood is to create a town centre where people will want to live, work and visit and a masterplan will assist with achieving this. The Council is adopting a pro-active approach to engaging with stakeholders, involving key partners to ensure that this vision will become a reality. In their submission, the GLA supports Merton’s plan-led approach.

2.4 Upon adoption of Merton’s Core Strategy DPD, the priorities are to focus, in the following sequence, on the:
   - Plan-led regeneration of Morden through the moreMorden Area Action Plan;
   - Engaging with key stakeholders to bring forward key sites essential to the incremental regeneration of the Mitcham town centre; and,
   - A plan-led approach to the regeneration of Colliers Wood (incorporating Colliers Wood and South Wimbledon and the AFI).

2.5 The priorities for plan-led projects will be detailed further in the next Local Development Scheme. Furthermore, it is likely, due to resourcing and time that the Colliers Wood masterplan will not be underway until 2015 (rather than the initial date of 2012). The Council remains in active engagement with developers of the former Brown and Root Tower. This site is the catalyst for the regeneration of Colliers Wood and the start of the masterplanning process.

2.6: Through engagement with the GLA, it was agreed that a plan-led approach would be an appropriate forum to demonstrate how Colliers Wood would be delivered as a District Centre. As part of this approach, work is being started or is underway with key partners, such as the GLA, Environment Agency, Transport for London and major landowners in Colliers Wood.