Regeneration Proposals

Achieving the Vision

7.24 The major challenge for Mitcham town centre is to ensure that its potential is fully realised. Taking into account its location, its assets and current developer interest, the Council is in a unique position to assist the expansion and consolidation of existing and new town centre activities in a sustainable way. This potential must not be wasted. The production of this Supplementary Planning Document and the development guidance it contains confirms that Merton Council is committed to ensuring that the full potential of Mitcham town centre is realised through a comprehensive Vision.

7.25 To achieve the Vision, regeneration proposals will have to create a safe, vibrant, walkable and integrated local district centre. The area will need to be home to new facilities that will be valued by new and existing communities. Creation of high quality, well designed new buildings and public spaces will be of key importance, while all those involved in the regeneration of the area will be required to protect and enhance its historic and green assets, as they greatly contribute to the identity and uniqueness of Mitcham town centre.

Regeneration Strategy

7.26 Plan 9 shows the regeneration strategy for the short to medium term (5-10 years). This shows development sites, the urban layout and land uses the Council wishes to see for the town centre core area. The urban layout is based on an exploration of different additions to, or modification of, the urban form of the area. This is aimed primarily at linking the new developments with the routes and spaces in the surrounding residential neighbourhoods in a more direct way, encouraging a much higher degree of pedestrian through movement, cycling and the use of public transport in the wider context.

7.27 Improved routes will bring higher footfalls to the businesses and sufficient pedestrian movement to the currently quiet areas within and around the core, making them safer. This system of ‘natural surveillance’ of the public realm by the passing pedestrians is the most socially and economically sustainable way of dealing with the issues of urban safety in traditional street based areas. The land use strategy is based on the principle of locating the major attractors and generators of movement, such as large retail units, a community facilities centre, transport and car parking facilities, around the edges of the core, to ensure even distribution of activity throughout the town centre. Another key principle is to ensure a mix of uses that generate and attract activity at different times of day and week.

7.28 The strategy is based on the principle of consolidating the uses around the pedestrianised section of London Road (between Holborn Way and St Mark’s Road). This will achieve a more concentrated, walkable environment for the central uses and replace the currently very elongated commercial core along London Road. It is envisaged that this first phase of development within the core area will be to the north and east side of the Fair Green, being followed by medium term development to the south of the Fair Green and Western Road. Expanding the development volume within the town centre is seen as an essential move in achieving a ‘critical mass’ of development that will generate sufficient level of activity on the one hand and be financially viable. However, it is critically important to do this without harmful effect on the historic fabric and character of the area or destroying Mitcham’s local distinctiveness.

Plan 9
Regeneration Strategy Diagram

Mixed Use

7.29 An appropriate mix of land uses in an area is key to its vitality. One of the factors in the decline of the town centre today is that it is largely retail dominated central area becomes very quiet, almost dangerous in the evening when the shops are closed. The problem is exacerbated by the absence of vehicular movement through the central area, as well as other factors affecting the
natural movement of pedestrians through the town centre, such as its fragmented spatial structure and the barrier effect of the traffic.

7.30 Building on the tradition of our best urban areas, this regeneration strategy encourages a variety of uses throughout the area. In well functioning areas a mix of uses is brought about by market forces and a presence of high quality, dense and flexible developments, with good accessibility, a mix of building types and retain a socially diverse population, to ensure activity and ‘presence’ in the area throughout the day and week. Mixed uses are most likely to be found in highly accessible, activity-rich areas.

Land Uses

7.31 In Mitcham town centre, the greatest mix of uses is envisaged in the core area around the Fair Green. Retail use represents a major element of the mix, with units ranging from a large food store anchor in the northeast corner of the centre and one or two larger units south of Western Road, to medium size multiple retailers and small independent shops. The smallest retail units, combined with restaurants, bars and cafes are proposed within the triangular block in the heart of the centre (around the new market square) and Fair Green. Various complementary services are also essential for a vibrant mix of uses, including banks, travel and estate agencies, hairdressers and other similar uses. Plan 10 shows the recommended disposition of land uses.

7.32 Most retail units should have residential development above ground floor in the form of flats and maisonettes. New residential and catering uses will ensure a presence of people in the area after many of the shops close. To complement the mix, a non-commercial focus for the community is provided by means of a new community facilities building, incorporating a number of community related uses and complementary retail and cafe/bar uses facing the Green. The leisure uses within this centre should be related to the recreational, environmental and atmospheric qualities of the Fair Green.

7.33 A larger retail anchor to the southwest of the Fair Green should be provided to balance the overall retail distribution in the town centre. Similarly, the parade of shops between the Fair Green and Mitcham Common provides a mix of smaller retail uses and this more peripheral location is appropriate for such uses. However the redevelopment of Langdale Parade, facing the Fair Green, offers the opportunity to increase the range of units and introduce a larger unit size to provide an anchor store in the southeast of the town centre core.

7.34 It is important that the land use designation provides a broad guidance to the nature of development, leaving a high degree of flexibility as to the particular allocation of space to any use. In this way future distribution of uses can be guided by demand and market forces and the area should be able to cope better and adapt quicker to the changes in the economic climate.