RESOURCES AND IMPLEMENTATION

7.1 The UDP Strategy indicates the desired future structure of Merton in 2016. However, the availability of land, finance and labour will determine the future scale and pattern of activities within the Borough. These are each considered in turn below. Local and national Government policies are considerations which have been examined in Chapter 1.

7.2 An essential aspect of the Plan is that the proposals and policies should be seen to be realistic in terms of their resource needs and the availability of other resources from both the public and private sectors.

LAND

7.3 Within current boundaries land, unlike certain other resources, cannot be increased in quantity. Legal, physical, financial and social constraints influence the availability and extent to which land can be used. The tendency in the Borough has been to redevelop land already in use, largely because the amount of vacant land available for development is minimal and the development of derelict land is often expensive and difficult. Frequently there are competing uses for the land which is available. It is against this background that the Plan seeks to identify opportunities, proposals and priorities which will enable maximum benefit to be gained from the limited land resource. The existing building stock is a valuable resource and every effort should be made to secure adaptation and re-use for its previous existing use, or for a new use. However, there will be instances where the economic and social benefits of redevelopment outweigh the advantages of retention.

7.4 Derelict and other vacant land relates to land not currently in use and does not include open spaces such as parks and commons. In 1988 approximately 119 hectares (294 acres) of land and property were either derelict or vacant. There are three important factors which restrict the extent to which this land can be brought back into use:

(i) uncertainty by the owners as to their future land requirements;
(ii) the high cost of reclaiming much of this land which is in poor physical condition;
(iii) historic land values or book values attached to some of the land which is far in excess of its real market value.

7.5 As well as vacant land, which has the potential for alternative uses, there also exist redundant sites and premises. Whilst in terms of the overall land use pattern some of the land use changes are small, they are significant in terms of their implications for employment and the economic base of the Borough.
POLICY LD.1: TEMPORARY AND PERMANENT USES

WITHIN THE SITES SHOWN ON THE PROPOSALS MAP FOR PARTICULAR USES, AND INCLUDED IN THE SCHEDULE OF PROPOSALS, OTHER FORMS OF PERMANENT DEVELOPMENT WILL NOT BE CONSIDERED APPROPRIATE. ALTHOUGH PLANNING PERMISSION FOR A TEMPORARY USE MAY BE GRANTED IN EXCEPTIONAL CIRCUMSTANCES TO FACILITATE THE USE OF A VACANT SITE PENDING COMPLETION OF SITE ASSEMBLY OR PRIOR TO THE COMMENCEMENT OF PERMANENT DEVELOPMENT.

POLICY LD.2: VACANT AND UNDERUSED SITES

WHERE NO PARTICULAR LAND USE IS INDICATED FOR A VACANT, UNDER-USED OR POTENTIAL DEVELOPMENT SITE ON THE PROPOSALS MAP THE SITE MAY BE SUITABLE FOR SEVERAL USES OR A MIXTURE OF USES. APPROPRIATE USES WILL BE JUDGED IN RELATION TO POLICIES ELSEWHERE IN THE PLAN.

POLICY LD.3: PLANNING BRIEFS

THE COUNCIL WILL PREPARE PLANNING FRAMEWORKS FOR SITES PROPOSED FOR DEVELOPMENT, EITHER IN RESPONSE TO DEVELOPERS’ INTEREST OR TO PROMOTE APPROPRIATE DEVELOPMENT.

Justification

7.6 Policies in this Plan set out general planning guidance. Where development of a particular site requires more detailed guidance, such as where several different planning or other policies affect the site, and clear advice is required; where a site is affected by planning constraints and it is to be promoted for development; and where there are specific features of the site or surroundings which warrant specific guidance the Council will prepare planning frameworks.

7.7 Planning frameworks will usually elucidate and exemplify relevant UDP policies applying to a development site, whilst development briefs have the purpose of promoting development or attracting a developer. In town centres, planning frameworks will be prepared to facilitate the development of key sites, and will include design principles as appropriate (see Policy TC.5, Chapter 5, Town Centres). For predominantly housing sites the Council may prepare “concept statements” which set out the main design principles and quality objectives for the site. These statements will be prepared quickly following development interest on a site and will be used as a guide for the preparation of development briefs.

7.8 The Council will consult with the public when preparing planning frameworks and development briefs to ensure that proposals reflect the aspirations of the local community. Where appropriate the Council may require a developer to contribute in the preparation of a development brief. Once approved, briefs will be treated as Supplementary Planning Guidance, and will form a material consideration in determining planning applications. The Council may review development briefs if, after a period of time, the site remains undeveloped.
POLICY LD.4: ACQUISITION AND ASSEMBLY OF LAND

THE COUNCIL WILL CONSIDER THE USE OF ITS STATUTORY POWERS TO ASSIST IN THE ACQUISITION AND ASSEMBLY OF LAND WHERE THIS IS CONSISTENT WITH PROPOSALS CONTAINED IN THE PLAN.

Justification

7.9 Unused and underused land and buildings represent a wasted asset and encouragement must be given to bringing such land and buildings back into beneficial use. The Proposals Map and Schedule of Proposals specify which policies and proposals apply to which parts of the Borough to a point where the property affected can be shown or described in each case. The proposals of the Plan have been formulated in the light of the Plan’s policies and allocate land to uses in order to achieve the planned overall objectives. Nevertheless it is recognised that, in addition to development opportunities, other development sites will arise during the period of the Plan.

7.10 Normally the Council will wish the UDP proposals to be implemented by agreement, but where it is essential to secure the aims of the Plan or to bring forward land for development or to prevent a development opportunity being missed, the use of statutory powers, including compulsory purchase, will be used.

7.11 The Council will operate within the terms of the Planning Acts in relation to statutory blight. It may be necessary for some properties to be purchased in advance of the due date for developments to occur to reduce any hardship which might otherwise be caused. If these properties were to remain empty there could be a serious blighting effect on the life of the Borough. To avoid this the Council will encourage the appropriate temporary use of such buildings and planning permission may be granted for a limited period.

Temporary use of land and buildings

7.12 There are many situations where it is appropriate for the Council to control the development of land by granting temporary planning permission. In certain circumstances, particularly where the permanent development of the land is constrained, the temporary use of the land will enable some benefit of the land to be derived in the short term. There are, however, many sites throughout the Borough where the same use has continued over many years through the repeated granting of temporary planning permissions. On some of these sites unsatisfactory environmental and planning conditions have developed. If the use is considered appropriate, then in considering applications to renew the temporary permission the Council may determine that full planning permission, with appropriate conditions, should be granted.

POLICY LD.5: TEMPORARY PLANNING PERMISSIONS

The council, in considering applications for temporary planning permission, including the renewal of existing temporary consent will have regard to plan policies and proposals in addition to the effects of such a temporary use on the local environment.
7.13 The granting of temporary planning permission, whether for the use of existing buildings or the construction of new buildings, should only be granted where there is a strong case for not granting a permanent planning permission. The granting of temporary permission for a new building will not be seen as an excuse for non-compliance with other planning policies.

FINANCE

7.14 Finance availability is probably the most critical element in determining the timing and form of future development. The aim of the Plan is to offer the opportunity for such investment to occur in a way which will benefit the Borough.

7.15 The Plan does not allocate responsibility for implementation of proposals to any particular agency and it does not cost the various proposals. Responsibilities between the private and public sectors are subject to change, as are their respective financial capabilities. The Plan provides a framework within which investment decisions can be encouraged. Nevertheless, there is a close relationship between public and private investment and successful implementation often relies on the use of resources from both parties. Wherever possible the resources of the Council will be directed to realising opportunities to harness private investment.

7.16 The Council will work in partnership with organisations, agencies interest groups and businesses to develop bids for external sources of funding. The eastern part of the borough, including the Wandle Valley Regeneration Area is the Council’s priority for attracting inward investment.

PUBLIC SECTOR FINANCE

7.17 Financial resources available in the public sector are largely determined by factors outside the control of the Council. Central Government exercises control over the level of expenditure for capital projects. In general, the Council has limited scope for expanding its resources to meet capital expenditure, except insofar as it is able to use a proportion of capital receipts, which it has obtained by the disposal of other Council assets. It must seek to achieve maximum benefit from the finances available and further develop alternative methods of finance in partnership with private interests.

7.18 At the present time the level of public sector capital resources available is severely limited and it is on the basis of this limitation on resources and the anticipated scale of investment which can be attracted from the private sector, that the level of public expenditure in the Plan must be established. This again highlights the need for regular reviews of the Plan to reflect changing circumstances.

PRIVATE SECTOR FINANCE

7.19 The future level of private sector investment in the Borough cannot be predicted, especially in view of the rapidity with which interest rates, confidence levels and profit margins change.

7.20 Private sector investment, particularly in commerce and industry, has made a major contribution to the development of the Borough. The Council will look towards the private sector to continue and improve upon its past contribution and secure many of