PUBLIC TRANSPORT

POLICY PT.1: LOCAL AND REGIONAL NEEDS

WHERE IMPROVEMENTS TO PUBLIC TRANSPORT ARE NECESSARY TO SUPPORT NEW DEVELOPMENT, CONTRIBUTIONS TO ONE OR MORE OF THE FOLLOWING IMPROVEMENT MEASURES WILL BE SOUGHT THROUGH PLANNING OBLIGATIONS:

(i) IMPROVED ORBITAL AND RADIAL BUS, TUBE, RAIL AND LIGHT RAIL-Routes AND SERVICES.

(ii) INTEGRATION OF PUBLIC TRANSPORT SERVICES THROUGH NEW INTERCHANGES OR IMPROVEMENTS TO EXISTING INTERCHANGES.

(iii) IMPROVEMENTS TO STATIONS/STOPS TO PROVIDE IMPROVED SAFETY, SECURITY AND ACCESSIBILITY FOR ALL.

(iv) IMPROVEMENTS OR IMPLEMENTATION OF BUS LANES AND OF SIGNALS TO ALLOW BUS PRIORITY.

Justification

6.1 To ensure that all sections of society can move conveniently from one place to another, it is essential that there is an integrated and balanced transport network that includes a comprehensive and efficient public transport system. The system should provide accessibility to all parts of the Borough and should be accessible by all, including people with disabilities. This strategy helps to reduce the need to travel by car and contributes to objectives for sustainable transport.

6.2 The attitudes of public transport operators and the public are undergoing a period of change that provides opportunities for major improvements, including light rail, use of midi-buses, new cross-London rail-links, competitive bus tendering, new underground lines and station redevelopment. The Council will support measures that will improve the provision of public transport and increase the attractiveness of buses and rail as a means of transport. This is consistent with Strategic Guidance for London Planning Authorities, 1996, which promotes greater use of less polluting modes of transport, subject to the need to maintain competitiveness and safety. It also seeks to enhance the quality of commuter services by road and underground. Major investment in existing and new public transport infrastructure in London is supported.

6.3 In Merton many people do not have access to a car and the road system cannot cope with the potential level of demand. Public transport offers the best way of moving people around the Borough, particularly for journeys to work and to main shopping centres. The Council therefore wishes to give the priority to improving public transport. This is important not just for journeys within Merton but for longer trips, including those to Central London, and the Council wishes to support improvements to public transport across London generally. Improving public transport is part of the Council’s strategy to improve accessibility within the Borough without major road building and there is widespread public support locally for this approach. The Council’s aim is to see a bus route or a rail station within walking distance of every dwelling in the borough.
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6.4 The Council is able to procure additional public transport services under the London Regional Transport Act 1984 and to subsidise these services if considered appropriate. Where improvements to public transport are necessary to support new development the Council will secure investment by commercial organisations in public transport infrastructure through planning obligations. The Council's highway powers may also be used to improve bus access and interchange facilities. These powers can be used to improve public transport where new developments impose additional demands on the public transport network or to alleviate existing public transport problems.

POLICY PT. 2: RAIL SERVICES

IN ORDER TO MAINTAIN AND IMPROVE RAIL SERVICES IN MERTON, THE FOLLOWING RAIL TRANSPORT SCHEMES ARE PROPOSED AND IDENTIFIED ON THE PROPOSALS MAP:

THAMESLINK 2000, EAST LONDON LINE EXTENSION, CROSSRAIL 2, MORDEN TO SUTTON LIGHT RAIL EXTENSION, NORTHERN LINE IMPROVEMENTS, EASTFIELDS STATION AND MITCHAM TOWN CENTRE INTERCHANGE.

LAND SHOWN ON THE PROPOSALS MAP IS SAFEGUARDED FOR THE CONSTRUCTION OF EACH OF THE ABOVE SCHEMES. DEVELOPMENT THAT WILL PREJUDICE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE SCHEMES WILL NOT BE PERMITTED.

Justification

6.5 The Borough is served by an extensive rail network, which was developed to serve an expanding commuter demand orientated radially towards Central London. The main line from Waterloo crosses the Borough from Earlsfield to New Malden and there are three branches, to Tooting and Streatham, to St. Helier and Sutton and to Motspur Park and Epsom. Privatisation of the rail system means that these services are now provided by a number of train operating companies. The London Underground Northern Line service runs through Tooting to Morden and the District Line through Putney to Wimbledon Station. Accessibility to the rail network is also good, with few residential neighbourhoods being more than 1 kilometre (0.6 mile) from a rail station. However, the Council believes that a great majority of homes should be within 1.5 kilometres of a rail station with a 20-minute interval minimum off-peak service.

6.6 Although the network and accessibility are good, the service provided varies widely. Whilst there is a frequent service to London on the main line, particularly from Wimbledon, services on the South Central and Thameslink lines are significantly less frequent. A half-hour service, even in the peaks, is common. The conversion of the West Croydon to Wimbledon link to a light rail service has allowed a greatly enhanced service to be provided and the opportunity to provide new stations markedly improving accessibility in Merton.

6.7 The Council also supports in principle an additional link on this light rail network to serve Mitcham town centre, which is currently very poorly served by rail, and is the largest residential area of the Borough more than 1 kilometre (0.6 mile) from a station. The benefits of extending these light rail routes further are being considered by the Council. In particular, the Council wishes to consider a link from Mitcham to Colliers Wood and Wimbledon as part of its policy of encouraging increased provision of public transport in the Borough and to recognise the benefits of establishing a public transport corridor and
high quality linkages between Mitcham, Colliers Wood and Wimbledon. A new link on the network between Morden Road and Sutton would add Morden town centre to the area served by the tram and would provide an interchange with the Northern line underground network. It would also significantly enhance the accessibility of the St. Helier estate. For any new light rail scheme the Council will seek to ensure that environmental disturbance and land-take is minimised and will carry out an environmental assessment and extensive public consultation. It is envisaged that the light rail route will follow existing roads, railway lines and open spaces with minimal property demolition.

6.8 The other South London line that has a poor service is the Wimbledon to Sutton loop line. The use of this line by Thameslink Services was investigated by the Central London Rail Study and was found to be economically the most beneficial scheme investigated. Thameslink is now the principal service provider on the line with some of the services provided by South Central. Service reliability and infrastructure have been improved but there is a need for a more frequent service and one which operates later in the evening.

6.9 The Central London Rail Study identified the need for a new underground line between Hackney and Chelsea, with an extension on to Wimbledon. The Council welcomes the principle of this enhancement to public transport provision and wishes to see an early implementation. The route for the line has been formally safeguarded. There is, however, a need to resolve platform and stabling arrangements at Wimbledon to minimise the safeguarded area and prevent “blight”. In addition the Council is concerned that access to District Line services from Wimbledon is maintained by provision of a convenient interchange between the new tube line and the District Line to provide links to the Edgware Road branch.

6.10 The Thameslink loop service via Tooting, Wimbledon, St. Helier and intermediate stations offer a direct service to Sutton, the City of London and destinations to the north of London. There is scope to greatly enhance this facility with many more destinations served and to relieve overcrowding on the underground. However there is a capacity problem on the existing line and a scheme, Thameslink 2000, has been developed between Network Rail Limited who are responsible for the railway infrastructure and the Train Operating Companies to greatly increase capacity on the route. The Council supports the Thameslink 2000 project and wishes to see its early completion.

6.11 The timetabled service on the Northern Line to Morden is good but this is frequently not achieved, mainly because of unreliable trains, or faults on the system. The stations on the line are also poorly maintained, have poor lighting and are unattractive. The Council supports proposals for a major improvement scheme on the Northern Line, including new trains and refurbishment of the stations, and welcomes the early implementation of these long overdue improvements.

6.12 By and large the railway system serves radial movements. The only exception to this is the Wimbledon to Croydon service which has been converted to a light rail line and now provides a good cross-Borough service. Recent studies by Merton and other South-West London Councils (SWELTRAC) have investigated the possibility of orbital rail routes linking Heathrow, Kingston, Wimbledon and Croydon (and Gatwick). The Council supports these aims of improving orbital rail routes and will press for the provision of improved services, subject to no detrimental effect on existing services. SWELTRAC has promoted these services and has also provided facilities to enhance orbital movements by other modes.
6.13 The Council has been pressing for some time for a number of additional stations in the Borough, one at Eastfields on the Mitcham Junction to Streatham line and one at Tooting on the East London line. The introduction of new light rail services on the Wimbledon to West Croydon line has enabled the provision of additional stations/holds at Dundonald Road, Phipps Bridge, and Belgrave Walk. The Council is also seeking the provision of a further stop at Wandile Way which would greatly enhance public transport accessibility to the Willow Lane Industrial Estate and nearby residential areas and schools. This brings a large proportion of residential areas, currently deficient in accessibility to rail stations, to within 1 kilometre of a station. At Eastfields, work has already been implemented to allow a station to be provided but a programme of implementation by Network Rail is awaited and associated funding needs to be secured. The possible link from Mitcham to Colliers Wood and Wimbledon could allow the completion of a light rail loop system in Merton and for consideration to be given to further new stations along this route.

6.14 A properly integrated transport system requires good interchange between modes. The opportunities offered by redevelopment are being taken to provide greatly improved interchange facilities at Wimbledon Station and Colliers Wood. Similar opportunities are also being sought at Raynes Park, Mitcham Junction and Mitcham town centre. An interchange between the Northern Line and the Wimbledon/Sutton service at Morden South should be evaluated.

POLICY PT.3: RAILWAY STATIONS

Developments that involve the improvement or redevelopment of railway stations will be expected to meet the needs of passengers by provision of the following:

(i) Good Security
(ii) Toilet Provision
(iii) Facilities for Cycles
(iv) Set Down and Pick Up Points for Buses, Taxis and Cars.

Justification

6.15 The Borough is currently served by 21 rail stations of which 12 are served by national rail services only, 4 are London Underground only, 6 are Croydon Tramlink only, 1 offers interchange between the National Rail Network and Tramlink and 1 (Wimbledon) offers interchange between the three systems. The facilities offered vary widely and of particular concern is the fact that half the Network Rail stations are unstaffed for most of the day.

6.16 There is clearly a need to remedy these deficiencies if the rail service is to be a safe, efficient and attractive public transport service, as envisaged by the Strategic Planning Guidance for London, and accessible by all, particularly the elderly and people with disabilities.
6.17 Redevelopment will provide an opportunity to improve facilities at some rail stations and the Council will be seeking these in any proposals that are submitted. Redevelopment is anticipated at Wimbledon town centre, Wimbledon Chase and Colliers Wood stations and possibly at Mitcham. Policies in Chapter 5 of this Plan provide further details of policies to achieve these improvements. It will be essential that interchange is improved, particularly with bus services but also with taxis and cycles (see Policy PT.4). At other stations, relatively low cost and short-term improvements to stations could be made and the Council will support the operators in making these improvements.

6.18 The margins of rail lines in Merton provide valuable wildlife habitats and can serve as corridors for the movement of wildlife and as a pleasant view for passengers. These should be protected and enhanced wherever possible (see Policy NE.8).

POLICY PT.4: PUBLIC TRANSPORT INTERCHANGES

INTERCHANGE FACILITIES AT WIMBLEDON, COLLIERS WOOD, RAYNES PARK, MITCHAM AND MORDEN WILL BE EXPECTED TO PROVIDE THE FOLLOWING:

(i) FACILITIES FOR ALL EXISTING RAIL, BUS AND TAXI SERVICES.

(ii) CAR SET DOWN AND PICK UP AREAS WILL BE JUSTIFIED WHERE CAR USE IS AN IMPORTANT PART OF CURRENT ACCESS TO THE INTERCHANGE.

(iii) SAFE AND CONVENIENT PROVISION FOR PEDESTRIANS AND DISABLED PEOPLE.

(iv) CAPACITY TO ACCOMMODATE LIGHT RAIL PROPOSALS, IF IDENTIFIED IN SCHEDULE 1.

Justification

6.19 The movement strategy adopted by the Council provides an enhanced public transport network with increased opportunity to change mode to reach many more destinations. Improved service frequencies will make this more attractive but it is important that facilities exist to allow the interchange to take place as conveniently and comfortably as possible (particularly at the new transport “hubs” of Wimbledon, Colliers Wood and Mitcham). Existing facilities are generally poor, bus stops are divorced from stations and are on-street where congestion of pedestrian and traffic routes is common. Morden has a major bus/underground interchange and improvements to the facilities have been made. Interchange within modes is often overlooked. This is particularly true for bus movements, where stops are frequently poorly signed and located, to allow passengers to switch services with minimum disruption to their journeys.

6.20 Redevelopment at Wimbledon and Colliers Wood will provide the opportunity for improved interchange and the Council will seek facilities for all existing rail services, bus services, taxis and the car “set-down” and “pick-up” areas. Adequate provision for pedestrians will be essential and the needs of people with disabilities will be given a high priority. There will be a need to accommodate the new light rail proposals as these are progressively introduced.

6.21 SWELTRAC funds are being used to improve interchange facilities at Mitcham Junction, Raynes Park and Wimbledon. Wandle Valley and SWELTRAC ILIP funds have been made available for interchange improvements at Colliers Wood, Wimbledon Chase, Wimbledon Park and in Mitcham town centre.
6.22 The Council will seek to ensure that bus stops are conveniently located and well lit, and that associated facilities are comfortable and attractive with adequate bus service information. Operators will be encouraged to use buses designed for safety and ease of access for all passengers. The bus operator can choose to place bus stops wherever appropriate but the Council will seek to ensure that they are in the most suitable locations and reflect existing or changed demand. The Council will also seek the provision of bus shelters and where possible these will incorporate seating.

6.23 Provision of adequate information is vital to generating public confidence in local bus services. The complex route pattern and variety of terminal points makes it difficult for intending passengers to fully comprehend the range of services which are available to them. Information is required on three levels:

(i) how do I get to my destination, which route or routes?

(ii) where do I catch the bus I need, which stop?

(iii) how often do the buses run, when can I expect the next bus?

6.24 The Council will seek the provision of information in the form of local maps, improved bus stop flags, improved time-table information at stops and diagrams of bus stop locations in main town centres. The Council will support the provision of signs to assist passengers to find appropriate stops.

6.25 As part of the development of improved interchange facilities, the Council will seek to ensure the adequate provision of information on public transport services including the development of local travel guides. The Council will advocate the establishment of staffed information points at Wimbledon, Colliers Wood, Mitcham and Morden.

6.26 Provision of adequate information is vital to generating public confidence in local public transport services, particularly in relation to bus services. The complex bus route pattern and variety of terminal points make it difficult for intending passengers to fully comprehend the range of services which are available to them. A survey undertaken for the Council found that the extent of knowledge of the bus network and its services is limited, particularly amongst car drivers. However a current review and expansion of the current bus network is being undertaken by the TfL London Buses.

6.27 Strategic Guidance for London Planning Authorities 1996 recognises the vital contribution taxis make to the social and economic life of London. Taxis can reduce car use by providing good links to public transport services and are especially valuable for people with disabilities. This Council similarly recognises the significant role of the taxi service and, in particular, its interchange potential at Wimbledon Station. Taxis provide a door-to-door service when a private car is not available and they provide an especially valuable service at suburban railway stations and in larger town centres.

6.28 The Council will seek adequate provision for taxis in redevelopments at rail and tube stations, in town centres and at hospitals and will ensure the provision of suitable bays to serve shopping areas.

6.29 The Council has resolved to retain the Merton Tramlink proposal as a longer term option. In the short term the Council will pursue access improvements based on bus priority measures, guided bus ways and other forms of sustainable transport along the Merton Tramlink corridor.
FIGURE 6.2
BOROUGH ROAD NETWORK
- STRATEGIC ROUTES (GLA Road Network)
- LONDON DISTRIBUTOR ROADS
- LOCAL DISTRIBUTOR ROADS
- LOCAL ACCESS ROADS
6.30 The Council recognises the role coach services can play within the framework of an integrated transport policy. Where developments are likely to generate a need for coach parking the Council seeks to secure off-street coach parking or setting down and picking up facilities. Where this is not achievable on-street facilities or Section 106 funds could be sought. It is also part of this policy to examine existing coach attractions in the borough to enhance accessibility and facilities.

THE ROAD NETWORK AND TRAFFIC RESTRAINT

6.31 Strategic Guidance for London Planning Authorities 1996 requires the Borough's road hierarchy to be developed in relation to the London Road Hierarchy and to be classified into Strategic Routes, London Distributor Roads and Local Distributor and Access Roads.

6.32 The Council's road hierarchy was defined in the Unitary Development Plan 1996. The purpose of the hierarchy is to help guide longer distance movements to appropriate parts of the road network, and to assist in the reduction and regulation of through traffic to protect residential and other sensitive areas from traffic intrusion. It will be used in the development of measures to reduce vehicle traffic, to improve air quality in line with the Environment Act 1995, and to meet the requirements of the Traffic Reduction Act 1997.

6.33 The Borough road network is shown on Fig 6.2 and on the Proposals Map. The hierarchy of roads and their intended function is defined as follows:

Strategic Routes

The function of Strategic Routes will be:

(i) to provide for longer journeys and particularly for those by goods vehicles and coaches;

(ii) to link London effectively to the national road system;

(iii) to reduce traffic demands on London Distributor roads so that, in association with restraint policies, they can provide an adequate level of service and, in turn, relieve local roads of through traffic.

The function of these roads is to carry traffic; there will be little or no direct access to adjoining land uses. Facilities for pedestrians and cyclists will generally be for crossing these roads rather than travelling along them.

London Distributor Roads

London Distributor roads will cater for journeys within and across Merton and between Merton and other Boroughs. They will provide:

(i) links to the Strategic routes;

(ii) access to strategic centres for short and medium distance traffic;