TOWN CENTRES AND SHOPPING

THIS CHAPTER INCLUDES PLANNING POLICIES COVERING;

(i) Town Centre Revitalisation.
(ii) Wimbledon Town Centre.
(iii) Mitcham and Morden.
(iv) Local Shopping.

5.1 Accessibility and transport policies for Merton’s town centres are set out in a separate section within Chapter 6 of this Plan and should be referred to. Detailed urban design and townscape guidance is similarly set out in Chapter 4 and supplements policies in this chapter.

TOWN CENTRE REVITALISATION

POLICY TC.1: PROMOTING DEVELOPMENT IN TOWN CENTRES

A LARGE DEVELOPMENT FOR TOWN CENTRE USES SHOULD BE LOCATED WITHIN THE DESIGNATED TOWN CENTRES OF WIMBLEDON, MITCHAM OR MORDEN. ONLY EXCEPTIONALLY, WHERE A LARGE DEVELOPMENT CAN BE SHOWN TO MEET THE PROVISIONS OF POLICY TC2 WILL IT BE PERMITTED OUTSIDE OF THE DESIGNATED TOWN CENTRES.

Justification

5.2 The Council is seeking to locate large town centre developments, in particular shopping, but also leisure and cultural uses, offices, hotels and related uses, within its town centres in accordance with guidance in PPG6 and Strategic Planning Guidance for London. This will assist in maintaining and enhancing the vitality and viability of these centres and ensure that development that attracts many trips is located where access by a choice of means of transport is available. These centres generally provide high quality accessibility by public transport which reduces the need to use cars and the Council’s transport policies are seeking to improve these services over the plan period. This approach is consistent with sustainable development aims, promoting urban renaissance and the efficient use of urban land that the Government is seeking to promote.

5.3 In 1999 the Council commissioned a major town centre study of need and capacity for retail and leisure facilities (the Town Centre Capacity Study). With respect to retailing this Study identified that schemes underway in Wimbledon in 1999 will meet current shopping demand but that quality should be improved and in the longer term a major new development should be promoted. Wimbledon needs improved food shopping facilities. Both Mitcham and Morden need further retail development although there appears to be limited potential to attract investment. In each centre the scale of development should reflect the local environment and the role of the centre, as well as take account of the effect on vitality and viability. Suitable sites for development are shown on the Proposals Map and policy ST.26 provides more guidance on the Council’s Town Centre strategy and the needs of particular centres. Both centres have important roles in providing a wide variety of facilities for the local community. They should provide improved food shopping facilities for the day to day...
needs of a large catchment population and attract larger units for other forms of shopping within existing designated frontages or sites identified for appropriate uses on the Proposals Map. These three designated town centres are particularly suitable locations for large retail, and other town centre development uses over 500 m² subject to the guidance in this policy, policy ST.26 and other relevant Plan policies. Policy TC.2 outlines the factors the Council will consider when proposals for town centre uses are made outside designated centres.

5.4 The Town Centre Study identified that Wimbledon is the main leisure and entertainment centre for the Borough and that current proposals will enhance facilities and meet residents needs in this area. However in Mitcham and Morden there is a need for new leisure and entertainment facilities. These developments generally require units of 740-1,850 m² and should be suitably located within sites shown on the Proposals Map.

With respect to office development Wimbledon is the main location for large offices and further guidance is provided in policies TC.9 -TC.12. Guidance on hotels and tourist attractions is set out in Chapter 3: Living and Working in Merton.

5.6 The Town Centre Study found that a more pro-active approach is required to ensure that town centre facilities can be provided and that the Council should develop town centre management initiatives and ensure suitable sites can be assembled for development.

5.7 As indicated in PPG6 paragraph 4.13, the Council will expect all applications for retail development over 2500m2 to be accompanied by the relevant information set out in that guidance.

POLICY TC.2: TOWN CENTRE TYPE DEVELOPMENTS OUTSIDE DESIGNATED TOWN CENTRES

OUTSIDE THE DESIGNATED TOWN CENTRES OF WIMBLEDON, MITCHAM AND MORDEN A LARGE DEVELOPMENT FOR RETAIL, LEISURE, ENTERTAINMENT OR OTHER TOWN CENTREUSES, OTHER THAN OFFICES, WILL BE PERMITTED ONLY IF THE FOLLOWING CRITERIA ARE MET:

(i) A NEED FOR THE DEVELOPMENT CAN BE DEMONSTRATED.

(ii) ALL POTENTIAL SITES WITHIN THE CENTRES OF WIMBLEDON, MITCHAM AND MORDEN HAVE BEEN THOROUGHLY ASSESSED AND RULED OUT, FOLLOWED BY AN ASSESSMENT OF EDGE OF CENTRE SITES WITH GOOD PEDESTRIAN ACCESS TO THE TOWN CENTRE CORE SHOPPING AREA, AND THEN FOLLOWED BY A FULL CONSIDERATION OF SITES WITHIN LOCAL CENTRES.

(iii) THE APPLICANTS CAN DEMONSTRATE THAT THEY HAVE BEEN FLEXIBLE ABOUT THE FORMAT, SCALE, DESIGN AND PARKING PROVISION IN THE SEQUENTIAL SEARCH FOR SITES, AS SET OUT IN (II) ABOVE.

(iv) THE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT WILL BE ACCESSIBLE BY A CHOICE OF MEANS OF TRANSPORT.

(v) THE VITALITY AND VIABILITY OF THE DESIGNATED TOWN CENTRES OF WIMBLEDON, MITCHAM OR MORDEN WILL NOT BE HARMED BY THE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT.

(vi) THE PROPOSAL WOULD NOT UNDERMINE THE DEVELOPMENT PLAN STRATEGY.
Justification

5.8 Town centre uses, including shopping, leisure and entertainment, other public facilities, commercial offices and other uses that attract a lot of people, should be located in the town centres of Wimbledon, Mitcham and Morden. Other plan policies seek to promote such locations for development, including ST.26-29, ST.31-34, TC.1, TC.3, TC.8, TC.9, TO.1, TO.2 LU.1-5. This approach represents the Council’s strategy for such development for the purposes of guidance in PPG6.

5.9 To comply with Government guidance, in particular PPG6, the Council has undertaken a Town Centre Capacity Study in 1999 that indicates that future retail and leisure developments can all be accommodated within Merton’s town centres. In general terms there is no ‘need’ for development of these uses outside these centres. Developers should therefore seek to locate such development within these town centres.

5.10 There may, however, be exceptional circumstances where an applicant contends that a development is needed and may need to be located outside a town centre. Such development proposals could include extensions to existing stores or changes to the range of goods sold. In addition new development proposals may come forward which need to be considered against this policy. It should be noted that proposals for retail warehouses, petrol station retailing, store extensions and change of goods within stores will be subject to the guidance in this policy.

5.11 As indicated in policy TC.1 the Council considers that town centre uses should locate within designated town centres and the Council wishes to take a positive and proactive approach to encourage potential investments into these areas. Developers should therefore work in partnership with the Council to ensure that their future development requirements can be satisfactorily accommodated. Where appropriate the Council will prepare development briefs. If necessary site assembly may be required and the Council will support such proposals where they meet the aims of this Plan. Policy TC.8 provides more guidance on this matter.

5.12 When the Council receives a proposal for a town centre use outside a town centre the applicant will be required to demonstrate that there is a qualitative and quantitative ‘need’ for the development. If this ‘need’ is accepted then a sequential site selection process will be required. The applicant should consider all options to assess whether the proposal could be located in a designated town centre. This assessment should include analysis of flexibility in a variety of formats and scale to meet identified needs and the extent of need in terms of time scale and other material factors. Where there is no ‘need’ for the development, a site assembly process should be undertaken.

5.13 Where no suitable sites within town centres can be identified, then an edge of town centre location should be considered which can be easily accessed by pedestrians from the adjoining town centre. If no edge of centre location is available then a location in a local or neighbourhood centre may be appropriate, depending on the scale of the proposal. Other plan policies such as S.1, S.4, provide advice on these matters. If these locations are not suitable then a location outside a designated centre may be considered.
5.14 However any proposals should be subject to the criteria listed in paragraphs 1.16-1.17 of PPG6. The location should be well served by public transport and have a choice of means of access. It should be located close to other similar facilities to enable linked trips and to reduce car use. Further guidance on such development is set out in Schedule 6 and Supplementary Planning Guidance for Out of Centre Retailing and Highways and Parking. In addition policy S.6 provides guidance on small scale retail development outside defined centres.

5.15 For the purposes of this policy there are no size limits for relevant development. All relevant types of development should be subject to this policy in accordance with guidance in PPG6 and other guidance. This policy particularly applies to large developments which policy TC.1 defines as those over 500m². However, policy TC.9 defines offices over 200m² as suitable for town centres and this policy may also be appropriate to smaller scale developments.

POLICY TC.3: MIXED USE DEVELOPMENT

A DEVELOPMENT PROPOSAL FOR A TOWN CENTRE USE OR A MIXED USE DEVELOPMENT WITHIN THE IDENTIFIED CENTRES OF WIMBLEDON, MITCHAM OR MORIDEN WILL BE PERMITTED PROVIDED THAT:

(i) THE SCALE AND NATURE OF THE DEVELOPMENT WILL BE COMMENSURATE WITH THE ROLE AND CAPACITY OF THE CENTRE IN WHICH THE DEVELOPMENT IS TO BE LOCATED.

(ii) IT WILL NOT HARM THE VITALITY OR VIABILITY OF THE CENTRE.

(iii) LARGE RETAIL OR LEISURE FACILITIES ARE LOCATED ON THE TOWN CENTRE SITES IDENTIFIED ON THE PROPOSALS MAP, UNLESS IT CAN BE DEMONSTRATED THAT ANOTHER TOWN CENTRE SITE IS MORE SUITABLE OR READILY AVAILABLE.

Justification

5.16 The Council is seeking to promote the vitality and viability of its town centres as focal areas for the community in accordance with national and strategic guidance. It is recognised that diversity of use can achieve these aims and support sustainable patterns of living by reducing car use and supporting linked trips to a range of facilities, work and housing.

5.17 Each centre requires a different range of uses and scale and grain of development, and more detailed guidance is set out in the following sections of this chapter. This advice includes proposals for particular sites. The Council recognises that different but complementary uses in the day and evening can make these centres more attractive to residents, workers and visitors.
5.18 Mixed use development can either include a mix within specified sites or a mix of uses on adjoining sites. In general residential use is best suited to upper floors with ground floors available for public activities and facilities. In town centres the Council is seeking high density housing that is especially suited for single person households with minimal parking. Uses that are especially suited to these centres include shopping, offices, leisure and entertainment, libraries, community, social and cultural facilities, hotels, transport interchange, public facilities, street markets, employment and education, restaurants, bars and cafes.

5.19 As indicated in Policy TC.1 all large developments (schemes of 500m2 and above) that attract high use by the public should be located in town centres where they can be well served by public transport, and where trips can be linked. To ensure that suitable sites are available to meet future demand and needs of residents and operators the Council commissioned the Town Centre Capacity Study in 1999. Its findings have been incorporated into the policies and proposals for each centre. The Study found that future demands and needs for retail and leisure development can all be accommodated within existing centres and that there is no justification for development outside these centres.

5.20 The Town Centre Study identified that operator's requirements for new facilities is increasingly for larger units and sizes of 5-10,000 ft² (464-928m²) for retail and 10-30,000 ft² (928-2784m²) for leisure are required. In some centres, sites are not readily available of this size and sites may need to be assembled or acquired to meet this demand. The Council will support proposals by developers to provide larger units in town centres, subject to other policies in particular to take account of the different needs of each centre and the scale of development that would be appropriate.

POLICY TC.4: TOWN CENTRE MANAGEMENT

TO ENSURE SUCCESSFUL TOWN CENTRES, THE COUNCIL WILL PROMOTE A RANGE OF TOWN CENTRE MANAGEMENT INITIATIVES IN PARTNERSHIP WITH LOCAL BUSINESSES AND RESIDENTS.

Justification

5.21 Town centres are part of our civic heritage and securing their health helps to foster civic pride and local identity. It also helps to promote sustainable development. This Plan is intended to provide a framework to encourage investment in town and local centres in Merton. However to achieve the Plan's aims requires a more proactive approach and partnership with landowners, developers and the local community.

5.22 There is an increasing awareness that the success of town centres depends on good management and close liaison with the owners, traders and users of these centres. Local Planning Authorities in their enabling role, preferably in partnership with the private sector and the local community, are advised to consider appointing a Town Centre Manager to co-ordinate public and private sector initiatives. Good town centre management should ensure the proper co-ordination and development of services to the town centre. More detailed non-statutory town centre management strategies and action plans, drawn up within the broad framework of the UDP, can bring forward initiatives such as environmental improvements, the enhancement of open spaces, recreation and entertainment activities, improvements in the safety, security and integration of public transport services and the pedestrian environment, parking and advertising. Competition between town centres is increasing, and it will be important to improve Merton's town centres to ensure their continued success.
5.23 The Council will therefore promote town centre management initiatives to implement and compliment planning policies to facilitate the development of town centres that people like and want to visit and which have economic success, vitality and are robust. The Council’s 1999 Town Centre Study found a high level of dissatisfaction by residents about the layout and atmosphere of Merton’s centres and these concerns need to be addressed. In particular there is a need to improve the quality of the pedestrian environment, reduce crime and anti-social behaviour, and the impact of traffic.

POLICY TC.5: GOOD URBAN DESIGN AND PUBLIC REALM

THE COUNCIL WILL PROMOTE IMPROVEMENTS IN ALL DESIGNATED CENTRES AND REQUIRE DEVELOPMENTS TO CONTRIBUTE POSITIVELY TO IMPROVING THE PUBLIC REALM AND ACHIEVING GOOD QUALITY URBAN DESIGN (SEE ALSO POLICY BE.38).

Justification

5.24 Government guidance in PPG1 and PPG6 in particular promote good quality urban design for town centres. Detailed urban design guidance is set out in Chapter 4 of this Plan. The 1999 Town Centre Capacity Study identified residents concerns about the quality of urban design in Merton’s town centres.

5.25 The Council will seek to provide a high quality environment in its town centres and this should contribute to their urban renaissance and the attraction of customers and visitors. An urban design analysis is required of each centre to guide future investment and development, and planning briefs will be prepared for the main opportunity sites.

POLICY TC.6: PROMOTING VITALITY AND VIABILITY

THE COUNCIL WILL SEEK TO PROMOTE THE VITALITY AND VIABILITY OF DESIGNATED TOWN CENTRES AND WILL:

(i) REQUIRE ACTIVE FRONTAGES FOR SITES AND DEVELOPMENT WHERE APPROPRIATE;

(ii) SUPPORT THE REUSE OF VACANT OR UNDERUSED LAND AND BUILDINGS;

(iii) SUPPORT 18-24 HOUR OPENING WHERE IT WILL NOT HARM RESIDENTIAL AMENITY;

(iv) IMPROVE THE QUALITY OF THE ENVIRONMENT;

(v) SEEK TO ATTRACT INVESTMENT IN APPROPRIATE DEVELOPMENT AND THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT;

(vi) ENSURE GOOD ACCESSIBILITY TO AND WITHIN THE CENTRES, ESPECIALLY FOR PEDESTRIANS.
5.26 The Council wishes to enhance the vitality and viability of Merton’s main town centres of Wimbledon, Mitcham and Morden to ensure their success. They should provide a wider range of facilities and high quality environment. Town centres should play a key role in meeting Merton residents needs for a variety of purposes, and different sections of the community require different facilities. Town centres need to contribute to the renaissance of urban areas and should be developed as multi-functional centres offering not only retail but increasingly complementary leisure and cultural facilities, living and working opportunities, safety and environmental improvements, traffic management to reduce pollution and the impact of traffic, improved accessibility, and the promotion of an appropriate development mix.

5.27 The emphasis in each centre varies and detailed policies in the following sections of the Plan reflect their particular needs. Although housing is being encouraged with town centres it is important that this is not provided at the expense of other town centre uses that are needed. Therefore housing should accommodate people who chose to live in town centres where benefits are available in terms of good public transport and a wide range of facilities. But residents will need to accept that the level of activity is higher and residential amenity may be of a reduced standard, when compared with single use residential areas. Policies TC.7, HP.4 and HS.1 provide further guidance on housing in town centres.

**POLICY TC.7: HIGH DENSITY HOUSING**

**WITHIN TOWN CENTRES HOUSING DEVELOPMENT SHOULD BE HIGH DENSITY AND SHOULD NOT CONFLICT WITH OTHER POLICIES FOR TOWN CENTRE USES. HOUSING AS PART OF MIXED USE DEVELOPMENT WILL BE ENCOURAGED.**

**Justification**

5.28 Advice in PPG3, PPG6 and PPG13 promotes higher density housing in town centres where public transport is good and where car parking standards can be minimised. This Plan supports this approach as a means of providing a variety of housing and meeting housing demand, in particular for one or two person households.

5.29 Policy HP.4 sets out the Council’s detailed policies for higher density housing. Policy HS.1 together with Supplementary Planning Guidance for new residential development, provides further guidance on housing standards these developments should comply with. In considering the density appropriate to particular sites account should be taken of the character of particular centres and other Plan policies. In general Wimbledon is more suited to higher density development and Mitcham is less suited to this form of development. In order to ensure that other town centre activities are retained and enhanced, and the vitality of centres is promoted, many housing sites should form a part of a mixed use development. In Mitcham the Council is promoting Urban Village policies (See Chapter 3).
POLICY TC.8: LAND ASSEMBLY

THE COUNCIL WILL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH LANDOWNERS AND DEVELOPERS TO ASSEMBLE SITES TO ACHIEVE THE REGENERATION AIMS OF THE PLAN.

Justification

5.30 The Council recognises that to achieve the Government's aims of sustainable development, greater emphasis should be placed on town centres. However, a major barrier to investment in town centres is high land values, a multiplicity of ownerships and the complexity of development, including site assembly. The Government is seeking to promote town centre regeneration and is reviewing the mechanisms to enable development to proceed more easily. The Urban Task Force and Urban Policy White Paper are seeking to identify suitable ways of meeting these aims.

5.31 The 1999 Town Centre Study identified that many of the best opportunities for town centre development in Merton will require a more proactive role by the Council if the aims of this Plan are to be achieved. Regeneration in Mitcham and Morden will in particular be dependent on initiatives by the Council in partnership with landowners and developers. The Council will therefore seek to support regeneration initiatives by taking a more proactive role and seek to identify the resources necessary to achieve its aims. Where necessary the Council will utilise compulsory purchase orders or similar mechanisms. (See also Policies LD.3, LD.4, and F.1 in Chapter 7 of the Plan).

POLICY TC.9: OFFICE DEVELOPMENT

THE COUNCIL WILL ENCOURAGE BUSINESSES WHICH WISH TO OCCUPY LARGER UNITS OF OFFICE DEVELOPMENT TO LOCATE IN THE DESIGNATED TOWN CENTRES OF WIMBLEDON, MITCHAM AND MORDEN, OR IN THE COLLIERS WOOD URBAN CENTRE, AS DEFINED ON THE PROPOSALS MAP.

OUTSIDE THESE AREAS PLANNING PERMISSION FOR LARGE OFFICES WILL ONLY BE GRANTED IN EXCEPTIONAL CIRCUMSTANCES WHERE:

(i) NO SUITABLE TOWN CENTRE SITE IS AVAILABLE.

(ii) A NEED CAN BE DEMONSTRATED.

(iii) THE SITE IS WELL SERVED BY PUBLIC TRANSPORT AND WHERE ADEQUATE ON STREET PARKING CONTROL IS IN PLACE.

Justification

5.32 The Council considers that the town centres of Wimbledon, Mitcham and Morden are the best locations in the Borough for the development of larger units of office space, which for the purpose of this Policy are defined as units of floorspace exceeding 200 m². Not only do the town centres tend to have the best public transport connections, thereby reducing the necessity for office employees to travel to work by private car, but town centre shopping and leisure facilities which benefit local residents are often sustained by the additional expenditure of local office employees. In addition, although it is not a town centre, by reason of its high levels of public transport accessibility the Colliers Wood Urban Centre is also considered to be a suitable location for large office units.
Moreover, the Council is concerned to ensure that employees in the Borough enjoy the best possible working environment and facilities, and from this point of view the town centres represent the best places in Merton for office workers to be located. Office development proposals will be subject to other Plan policies and the scale of any proposals should respect the character of the local area. (See policy BE.22).

In exceptional circumstances the Council may permit larger offices in other parts of the Borough where no suitable town centre site can be identified in accordance with guidance on the sequential approach in PPG6. In addition a particular need for office use should be established and the site should be well served by public transport. Suitable locations could include Local Centres and employment sites on public transport corridors and where there is a controlled parking zone. Transport assessments should be submitted with all development proposals for large offices because they are major generators of travel demand.

POLICY TC.10: MIXED USE ON LARGE OFFICE DEVELOPMENT SITES

IN OFFICE DEVELOPMENTS ON LARGER SITES THE COUNCIL WILL REQUIRE A MINIMUM OF 20% OF THE NET FLOORSPACE OF THE DEVELOPMENT TO BE FOR NON-OFFICE USE.

Justification

The Council is seeking to ensure that while it increases the capacity of its town centres to accommodate office employment, that increased capacity does not compromise its intention of retaining a diverse range of uses in the these centres as a means of enhancing their vitality. The Policy aims to allow smaller sites to be developed or redeveloped exclusively for office use, but seeks to ensure that where large office developments are proposed on sites exceeding approximately 0.25 hectares, that the building should include a mix of uses, thereby ensuring that the valued physical and functional diversity of the town centres cannot be overwhelmed by a few large office developments.

POLICY TC.11: CONVERSION OF OFFICES TO RESIDENTIAL USE

WITHIN THE DESIGNATED TOWN CENTRES PLANNING PERMISSION WILL BE GRANTED FOR CHANGE OF USE FROM OFFICE FLOOR SPACE TO RESIDENTIAL, ONLY IF IT CAN BE DEMONSTRATED THAT FULL AND PROPER MARKETING OF THE SITE OR PREMISES FOR AT LEAST 2 YEARS CONFIRMS THE UNSUITABILITY AND FINANCIAL NON-VIABILITY FOR OFFICE PURPOSES.

Justification

There is a significant shortage of modern office floorspace within Wimbledon town centre and there has been steady growth in the demand for a Wimbledon location from certain types of businesses. The Council wishes to increase the Borough's (and particularly Wimbledon's) capacity for attracting and accommodating office employment in order to meet the need for more accessible, good quality employment for its resident workforce.
5.37 The Policy is intended as a means of protecting the best office development and location opportunities within the designated town centres against strong short term pressure for change to residential use. Recent office development activity in Wimbledon has largely taken place on the fringes of the town centre close to sensitive residential areas, and this is partly because the opportunities for office development in the former Commercial Area have been limited. Protecting office floorspace and providing office development opportunities in the town centre is facilitated by the Plan. (See also Policy WTC.6 in this chapter).

5.38 For the purposes of this policy the Council would regard a small site as being one which is less than approximately 0.1 hectares, and a small office unit as being less than 150 m² gross.

POLICY TC.12: OFFICES ABOVE SHOPS OUTSIDE THE TOWN CENTRES

Outside the Town Centres the Council will permit a range of uses in the floors above shops and will permit changes of use between these uses except in the following circumstances:

(i) Where the internal space cannot satisfactorily accommodate the proposed use in the light of standards set out in supplementary planning guidance;

(ii) Where the external environment does not permit the satisfactory conduct of the proposed use;

(iii) Where the proposed use will have an adverse impact on the surrounding environment;

(iv) Where the space in question is occupied (not vacant);

(v) Where any proposed employment use is substantial.

Justification

5.39 The purpose of this policy is to ensure that vacancy levels in neighbourhood shopping parades are kept to a minimum and that these parades contribute to a sustainable and vital mix of uses in the neighbourhoods within which they are located. The restriction on the scale of employment uses in such parades is to ensure that larger businesses are directed to more appropriate locations such as the town centres, the industrial areas or larger sites. It is considered that office users which need to occupy more than about 200 m² should be directed to the town centres, because that is where their employees can best be accommodated in terms of public transport and other facilities (see also Policies MU.1-MU.3).
POLICY TC.13: UPPER FLOORS IN SHOPPING STREETS

THE COUNCIL WILL ACTIVELY SUPPORT PROPOSALS WHICH BRING UPPER FLOORS ABOVE SHOP UNITS INTO USE WHERE UPPER FLOORS IN SHOPPING AREAS SHOWN IN TABLE 6.1 ARE NOT IN RETAIL USE, A RANGE OF USES WILL BE CONSIDERED WHERE:

(i) THERE WOULD BE NO LOSS OF RESIDENTIAL OR BUSINESS ACCOMMODATION WHERE THIS IS AN ESTABLISHED USE;

(ii) THE VIABILITY OF THE GROUND FLOOR UNIT WOULD NOT BE ADVERSELY AFFECTED;

(iii) THERE WOULD BE NO DETRIMENTAL EFFECTS ON THE ENVIRONMENT AND FUNCTIONING OF THE TOWN CENTRE;

(iv) THE AMENITY OF NEIGHBOURING RESIDENTIAL OCCUPIERS WOULD NOT BE ADVERSELY AFFECTED;

(v) THERE IS NO LOSS OF AN INDEPENDENT ACCESS FROM THE STREET.

Justification

5.40 Many upper floors above shops are often under-used or vacant. Such valuable sources of floorspace in shopping areas should be encouraged for activities appropriate to shopping locations. Residential use is considered acceptable as it contributes to the diversity and maintains the vitality of a town centre. There is also demand for accommodation above shops from commercial users such as retailers themselves, restaurants or office occupants. All such users, however, must be able to add to the vitality of the shopping street whilst not adversely affecting the amenities of neighbouring occupiers. It is important to retain independent access from the street; this becomes unnecessary, however, where the ground and upper floors are occupied by the same retailer.

WIMBLEDON TOWN CENTRE

5.41 Wimbledon town centre is the Borough's main shopping and entertainment centre, office location and a major transport interchange. It is defined as a Major Centre in Strategic Planning Guidance, 1996.

5.42 The Wimbledon Town Centre Viability Study 1996, and the Town Centre Capacity Study 1999 supports the Plan maintaining the town centre's function as a Major Centre, an important location for shopping, offices, entertainment, cultural and community activities and as an important transport interchange. The latter Study recommended that the emphasis in Wimbledon should be on consolidation and qualitative improvements, particularly of the environment and layout of the town centre. In addition, provision should be made for future retail and other development in order to maintain the town centre's competitive position in the future.

5.43 Policies for the town centre should be considered in conjunction with other Plan policies as appropriate, particularly Transport policies TO.1 to TO.2.