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.
Strategy

5.44 In recognition of Wimbledon town centre's importance the Strategy below builds on and emphasises the existing strengths and character of the town centre, and protects adjoining residential areas from development pressures and adverse environmental impacts. The Strategy seeks to apply principles of sustainable development:

(i) To consolidate the town centre as the principal town centre in Merton providing a diverse range of activities including shops, offices, residential, leisure, cultural, entertainment, arts and community facilities.

(ii) To maintain and enhance the character and diversity of the town centre, to improve the quality of the environment and to protect the amenity of adjoining residential areas.

(iii) To improve accessibility to and within the town centre and in particular to enhance conditions for pedestrians.

(iv) To encourage and seek co-operation with local landowners, businesses, residents and local organisations to bring about the improvements needed over the next 10 years.

Objectives

5.45 To achieve the aims of this Strategy over the next ten years the following planning objectives are proposed:

New Facilities

(i) To attract a mixture of town centre facilities to key sites, which create diversity and variety, meet the needs of Borough residents and create a lively and safe environment.

(ii) To attract multiple retail traders and larger stores in order to widen the range of shopping, and retain smaller retail businesses and specialist shops which complement them.

(iii) To encourage new leisure, entertainment, community and cultural facilities and to preserve existing facilities. These facilities should integrate with other town centre activities and have regard to the amenity of nearby residents.

Employment

(iv) To increase employment within the town centre and to maximise the advantages of good public transport accessibility.

(v) To encourage new development including an increase in the provision of new high specification office floorspace.
Environment and Townscape

(vi) To ensure that new development satisfactorily relates to surrounding buildings, the character of the centre and is of a high quality. To protect the character and appearance of the town centre's Conservation Areas, and retain those existing buildings that are important to the character of the town centre.

(vii) To enhance the environmental quality of the town centre by creating new public spaces/town squares, improved landscaping, streetscape and street furniture, promoting public art and encouraging facelifts to buildings and sites where appropriate.

(viii) Improving conditions for pedestrians, including the mobility impaired, by controlling traffic speeds, creating traffic free areas, safe and convenient road crossings and footway widths, creating new footpath links and ensuring a high quality pedestrian environment throughout the town centre.

(ix) Enhancing the vitality, interest and variety of the centre by retaining diversity of land-use and encouraging mixed uses.

Accessibility

(x) To improve accessibility, safety and environmental quality within the town centre in particular for pedestrians and cyclists.

(xi) To provide for the variety of needs of people with disabilities.

(xii) To provide public short-stay car parking in conjunction with new public facilities but to restrain the use of the car in recognition of the environmental impact and the good public transport services.

(xiii) To seek improvements in public transport services by improvements to Wimbledon Station Precinct and interchange facilities, and to support a range of measures to improve bus services.

(xiv) To protect surrounding residential areas from intrusive effects of through traffic by traffic calming, controlled parking zones and other measures, whilst maintaining an adequate level of accessibility.

(xv) To improve the highway network in conjunction with the development process to enhance local access.

Housing

(xvi) To maintain, protect and enhance existing residential areas in and around the town centre, and encourage opportunities for new high density residential development, in particular to bring back vacant upper floors into use.
POLICY WTC.1: A MIXED USE TOWN CENTRE

IN ORDER TO ACHIEVE A BALANCED MIX OF USES IN WIMBLEDON TOWN CENTRE, THE SITE PROPOSALS LISTED IN SCHEDULE 1, AND ON THE PROPOSALS MAP, WILL BE DEVELOPED ONLY FOR THE PURPOSES FOR WHICH THEY ARE IDENTIFIED.

DEVELOPMENT ON OTHER SITES WILL BE REQUIRED TO ACHIEVE A BALANCE OF MIXED USES, INCLUDING THE USE OF UPPER FLOORS OVER SHOPS FOR RESIDENTIAL PURPOSES.

Justification

5.46 There is a need for variety of uses within the town centre to meet residents’ needs for a range of town centre facilities. Mixed uses will enable the vitality of the town centre to be supported by encouraging activities outside normal shopping hours. In large schemes a mix of uses will be sought so that no one use will dominate the scheme to the detriment of the character of the town centre. Further details of suitable uses for specific sites are contained within the Schedule of Proposals and shown on the Proposals Map. The floorspace mix will exclude parking and servicing areas and will relate to the Gross Leasable Areas (GLA) within particular sites. Planning Briefs will be prepared where appropriate to ensure that a genuine mix of uses are achieved and to reflect their importance to the future of the town centre (See Policy LD.3). PPG6 provides further material guidance on diversity in town centres.

POLICY WTC.2: EXTENSION OF P3 DEVELOPMENT SITE

THE COUNCIL SUPPORTS THE EXTENSION OF THE P3 SITE FOR DEVELOPMENT FOR COMMUNITY USES

Justification

5.47 The P3 site was identified in the Adopted Plan, 1996, for Mixed Use Development. Development proposals for most of the P3 site have now been implemented in accordance with the approved Development Framework. The Town Centre Capacity Study has identified development opportunities in The Broadway adjoining the site. The Council wishes to complete the development of the site for community uses. These uses could include a major public building for arts, culture, entertainment and leisure activities.

5.48 In order to provide wider opportunities for comprehensive development and to improve public access to the development the Council has therefore extended the P3 proposal to include adjoining sites on Wimbledon Broadway. In extending the site for future development the Council will seek to encourage the comprehensive planning of the site, but will not oppose the possible development of the extended site in two phases. However in extending the site the Council will require the continued provision of car parking and vehicular access to the site under the terms of the development agreements relating to the adjoining development.

5.49 Should a developer wish to pursue the development of the extended site the Council will prepare a revised Development Framework for the development of the site in conjunction with the developer and will assemble land, using Compulsory Purchase Powers in accordance with Policy TC.8, if necessary, in order to achieve comprehensive development. This approach accords with planning guidance contained in PPG6. The enlarged site is designated as 2 WTC in the schedule of Proposals and shown on the Proposals Map.
POLICY WTC.3: THE PRIMARY SHOPPING AREA

A PROPOSAL THAT WILL LEAD TO THE LOSS OF ONE OR MORE SMALL SHOP UNITS IN THE PRIMARY SHOPPING AREA WILL NOT BE PERMITTED, UNLESS IT CAN BE DEMONSTRATED THAT SUCH LOSSES WILL NOT UNDERMINE THE OVERALL CHARACTER AND QUALITY OF THE AREA.

Justification

5.50 In 1996 a Wimbledon Town Centre Viability Study was undertaken which confirmed the need for development of the P3 site for additional shopping and leisure facilities. The Town Centre Capacity Study, 1999, found that the current demand for retail floorspace will be met by the P3 site, but there is potential for growth in retail floorspace in the long term.

5.51 The range of shopping facilities currently provided is therefore adequate to meet the expressed needs of Merton residents, particularly for multiple trader outlets. The future for Wimbledon as a shopping centre can best be secured by creating a town of recognised character and quality and by increasing the shopping attraction of the Centre thereby enhancing the turnover potential of the many existing small and specialist shops.

5.52 The provision of large space shop units suited to the needs of multiple retailers, will strengthen the role of Wimbledon as an effective Major Centre. In particular the Town Centre Capacity Study identified a need for large 464.5 m² (5,000 ft²) food stores in order to add to existing provision. Provision of a suitable proportion of small unit shops will also be sought by retaining, as far as practicable, existing uses. In addition to durable goods shopping there is a need for larger food stores, in excess of 465 m² (5000 ft²) in order to improve the quality of food shopping.

POLICY WTC.4: CHANGE OF USE IN THE PRIMARY SHOPPING AREA

WITHIN THE PRIMARY SHOPPING AREA OF WIMBLEDON TOWN CENTRE PLANNING PERMISSION WILL NOT BE GRANTED FOR CHANGE OF USE FROM RETAIL (CLASS A1) OR FOR THE REDEVELOPMENT OF GROUND FLOOR SHOPS FOR OTHER USES.

Justification

5.53 In order to reinforce Wimbledon as the Borough’s primary shopping centre and to secure the regeneration of the town centre and also to provide a shopping environment attractive and convenient for the Borough’s residents, the Council has identified a primary shopping area from which non-shop uses will be excluded. In the wrong place, non-shop uses can be detrimental to the retail activity of the town centre.

5.54 In addition to the primary shopping areas the Council has designated core and secondary shopping frontages in the town centre. These frontages are considered to fulfil similar functions to shopping frontages in other Borough shopping centres and policies for Core and Secondary Frontages set out in the Town Centres and Shopping Chapter will, therefore, be applied to these parts of the town centre. Table 5.1 lists the properties to which these policies apply.
POLICY WTC.5: LEISURE AND ENTERTAINMENT FACILITIES


Justification

5.55 The Town Centre Capacity Study found that Wimbledon provides entertainment and leisure facilities serving the Borough and areas around, and it is important that these facilities add to and complement existing provision. This would ensure that Wimbledon is a properly equipped town and strategic centre. This Policy is not intended to prohibit redevelopment which would involve the demolition or change of use from existing entertainment and leisure facilities but will require that replacement facilities, perhaps different to that which existed, are provided. In some instances the new facility may be located on a different site in the town centre in which case the suitability of that site, in the context of the town centre as a whole, will need careful consideration. In granting planning permission which includes the provision of replacement facilities the Council will wish to be satisfied that the proposals are implemented in their entirety.

POLICY WTC.6: OFFICE DEVELOPMENT

OFFICE DEVELOPMENT WILL BE PERMITTED WITHIN WIMBLEDON TOWN CENTRE IN ACCORDANCE WITH POLICIES TC.9 AND TC.10 AND SUBJECT TO OTHER POLICIES IN THE PLAN.

Justification

5.56 Wimbledon town centre is identified in Strategic Guidance, 1996, as a location which is highly accessible by public transport. It is a highly attractive office location for a range of types of business. The centre already accommodates an estimated 10,000 office jobs, of which about 20% are occupied by Merton residents, and it has the potential to attract many more. These jobs provide good quality local employment opportunities for Merton's economically active population, and reduce the level of commuting out of the Borough. They also represent a source of consumer demand which helps to underpin the shopping and leisure facilities within the centre, and they greatly contribute to Wimbledon's vitality. Some of the most appropriate sites for office development have been developed for alternative uses such as residential, and there has been little replacement of the stock of outdated office floorspace. However, in 1999 there was considerable unsatisfied demand from businesses for units of floorspace of over 1,000 m². and opportunities need to be created in suitable parts of the town centre for the development of new, high quality office accommodation.
At the same time, an over-emphasis on office development would be detrimental to the character of the area and to the Council's aim of creating a balanced mix of uses throughout the town centre. For this reason, Policy TC.10 seeks to incorporate other uses in large office development sites. In addition major office developments will be expected to contribute directly and indirectly (by means of Planning Obligations) to the quality of the town centre as well as to its effective management, where these contributions are fairly and reasonably related to the proposed development. (See Policy F.2).

Sites particularly suited to development for office purposes are identified on the Proposals Map.

**POLICY WTC.7: HOTEL DEVELOPMENT**

The Council will support hotel development within the town centre subject to the criteria contained within Policy T.1.

**Justification**

There is a recognised need for additional hotel accommodation outside central London, and the Council's Tourism/Visitor Strategy, 1999, supports Wimbledon town centre as a suitable location for hotel development. A main advantage of this location is the very good accessibility by public transport and the other town centre facilities available locally. A hotel development that includes ancillary leisure, social and conference facilities would be especially beneficial if available for use by the general public, and such provision will be sought.

**POLICY WTC.8: DEVELOPMENT FACILITIES**

In considering proposals for development within the town centre, the Council will, where appropriate, seek the provision of infrastructure or facilities and other benefits which meet a planning purpose and which fairly and reasonably relate to the proposed development, through the use of Planning Obligations.

**Justification**

The Council will seek to ensure that private sector development achieves the full range of the Plan's aims and will encourage developers to contribute to the provision of a range of environmental improvements, community and transport facilities such as:

- Light Rail Tram facilities
- Public Transport interchange improvements
- Other Public Transport improvements
- Cycling facilities
- Pedestrian Facilities
- Off-site access roads to serve new development
POLICY WTC.9: WIMBLEDON STATION PRECINCT

SITE 1WTC IS A PUBLIC TRANSPORT INTERCHANGE SITE PROPOSAL, IDENTIFIED ON THE PROPOSALS MAP AS A TRANSPORT DEVELOPMENT AREA. THE SITE IS TO BE COMPREHENSIVELY REDEVELOPED FOR THE RANGE OF MIXED USES DEFINED IN SCHEDULE 1. DEVELOPMENT WILL NOT BE PERMITTED AT OR IN THE VICINITY OF SITE 1WTC IF IT PREJUDICES COMPREHENSIVE REDEVELOPMENT OF THE SITE.

Justification

5.61 This site (formerly known as the P1 Site) extends to approximately 3.9 hectares and is centrally located in Wimbledon Town Centre over the railway tracks at and including Wimbledon Station. It has been identified as suitable for a redevelopment scheme of town centre uses including retail, hotel/conference centre and offices (B1). The site incorporates Wimbledon Station which is developing as south London's most important multi-modal, public transport interchange. The site is identified as 1WTC in the Schedule of Proposals and on the Proposals Map.

5.62 Wimbledon Station Precinct (WSP) is the most important development site in Wimbledon providing longer term capacity for securing a major town centre redevelopment scheme in partnership with Network Rail for securing an improved public transport interchange, more sustainable access to the town centre and an improved and extended pedestrian environment. It is also the most strategically accessible site in Wimbledon with a maximum public transport accessibility index. Introducing a Transport Development Area (TDA) is a mechanism to secure high density development at/around public transport nodes. Designating WSP as a TDA and reinforced by the preparation of a development brief as SPG will provide the important policy linkage between accessibility, density and location and provide the basis for securing benefits in terms of placemaking and public realm improvements. Support for this approach has been indicated in the revised consultation draft PPG13 (Transport).
5.63 The Council prefers a comprehensive redevelopment scheme to take place incorporating the creation of a major new rail concourse and public square, and a range of land uses supported by vehicular servicing arrangements provided from a new bridge link is indicated as proposal 16T on the proposals map. A redevelopment scheme could be completed towards the end of the plan period thereby ensuring the long term development potential of the town centre as Merton’s strategic centre. The development of Wimbledon Station precinct will also include the creation of pedestrianised areas on Wimbledon Bridge as an enlarged forecourt to Wimbledon station, together with measures to improve the adjoining pedestrian environment in accordance with Policy WC1 of the plan. The precinct will be integrated with adjoining developments and the development of a public transport interchange at the station, including a bus/coach station on the Alexandra Road frontage. The Council will support the acquisition of land to secure the comprehensive development of the site in accordance with Policy LD4.

5.64 Wimbledon Station Precinct is currently the last major redevelopment site in the town centre. The Town Centre Capacity Study found that development at Wimbledon Station is the key to maintaining the town centre’s competitive position in the future in terms of facilities, amenities and accessibility. It is, however, a long term opportunity. Retail (convenience and durable goods) and offices are identified as the preferred principal uses. A redevelopment scheme could be completed towards the end of the Plan period thereby ensuring the long-term development potential of the town centre as Merton’s strategic centre.

5.65 The Council prefers a comprehensive redevelopment scheme to take place incorporating the creation of a major new rail concourse and public square, and a range of land uses supported by vehicular servicing arrangements provided from a new bridge link across the tracks between Alexandra Road and Queens Road. (The bridge link is indicated as Proposal 16T on the Proposals Map). The development of Wimbledon Station Precinct will also include the creation of pedestrianised areas on Wimbledon Bridge as an enlarged forecourt to Wimbledon Station, together with measures to improve the adjoining pedestrian environment in accordance with Policy WC1 of the Plan.

5.66 Wimbledon Station Precinct will be integrated with adjoining developments and the development of a public transport interchange at the station, including a bus/coach station on the Alexandra Road frontage.

5.67 The development of the Precinct will be promoted as a Partnership Scheme and facilitated by the preparation of a Planning Brief for the site drawn up in consultation with the landowners, especially Railtrack. The Council will support the acquisition of land to secure the comprehensive development of the site in accordance with Policy LD4.