Chapter 2

STRATEGIC PLANNING POLICIES

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2.1 This chapter outlines Merton’s strategic planning policies developed from national and strategic planning guidance. The policies reflect and guide the UDP Strategy outlined in Chapter 1 and provide a spatial strategy which is shown in Fig. 1.2. Strategic policies set out the general principles to guide the Council’s decisions relating to the nature and location of new development in the future. These policies in particular seek to promote sustainable development and to integrate land use and transport planning.

PLANNING FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

POLICY ST.1: SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Development proposals will be expected to meet the principles of sustainable development. In applying this policy, the sustainability of a development will be assessed against the Council’s sustainability checklist. Where large development schemes are proposed, developers should submit a sustainable development statement with the planning application.

Justification

2.2 Sustainable development has been defined as development which meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. Targets and indicators for sustainability are included in Chapter 1 of this document, and planning powers can contribute to the achievement of the targets set out. The Council has prepared Supplementary Planning Guidance on “Sustainable Development”, which sets out matters to be taken into account, and includes areas as to how development proposals can minimize their impact.

2.3 The Council will assess developments in relation to its Sustainability Checklist, and to the Supplementary Planning Guidance on Sustainable Development. The checklist provides a scoring system, which gives an indication of the sustainability of the development proposal. Major development schemes are defined as where either (i) they involve more than 10 dwellings, or (ii) where the proposed floorspace is more than 1,000 sq metres, or where the development is on a site of more than 1 hectare. This statement should set out the environmental, social, economic and natural resource implications of the development proposals.

POLICY ST.2: EQUITY

The Council will promote equal opportunities for all through sustainable development.
Justification

2.4 Government planning guidance, such as PPG12, recognises that sustainable development should promote greater social equity and social inclusion. Merton's UDP Sustainability Appraisal, 1998, includes equity criteria and objectives that are set out in chapter 1 of this Plan. Policies in the Plan and their implementation reflect these aims and seek to improve access to jobs, housing, transport and other facilities for all. The UDP therefore seeks a range of different dwelling sizes and tenures to meet changing household formation and those unable to afford market housing. Also policies promote a diverse local economy with well paid jobs; improved employment, education and training opportunities in the east of the Borough. Policies seek to improve health and reduce health inequalities, reduce crime and disorder and promote community safety. Policies will provide an affordable and accessible transport system and facilitate inclusion and improvements in the quality of life for those groups and individuals who, because of particular barriers, are presently unable to participate independently in the community. The Council's Supplementary Planning Guidance Note for Sustainable Development provides further guidance on this subject.

2.5 Government guidance for sustainable development recognises the importance of social and equity issues as set out in the Government's Sustainable Development Strategy. PPG11 similarly identifies the need for a sustainability appraisal of regional guidance and that this should fully take into account the needs and experiences of all members of the community affected by their policies. This is identified to include most particularly, women as well as men, the elderly, young people, people of different ethnic or religious backgrounds, disabled people, single parent families and other disadvantaged groups.

POLICY ST.3: MIXED USES

DEVELOPMENT PROPOSALS SHOULD COMPLY WITH SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AIDS FOR MIXED USES IN THE INTEREST OF PROVIDING A SUSTAINABLE LIVING AND WORKING ENVIRONMENT IN MERTON.

Justification

2.6 A key requirement of sustainable patterns of living and working is to encourage urban areas which contain a wide mixture of uses in relatively close proximity. This diversity of use should contribute to an urban renaissance: this creates liveable urban areas where people have easy access to the facilities and amenities they need. Town and local centres in particular are well suited to achieving a wide mix of uses, as are main road frontages and areas near public transport interchanges or stations. The Plan will encourage Urban Villages in parts of the Borough. The Council's Supplementary Planning Guidance Note for Sustainable Development provides further guidance on this subject.

2.7 Government planning guidance in PPG1 advocates Local Planning Authorities to promote and retain mixed use development as a contribution to more sustainable patterns of living. Mixed use development is seen as helping to create vitality and diversity and reduce the need to travel. However policies should not undermine the character of existing residential areas by encouraging inappropriate new uses. To guide application of these principles the DETR published a Good Practice Guide for Sustainable Development in October 1998.
POLICY ST.4: ENVIRONMENTAL CAPITAL
THE COUNCIL WILL PROTECT AND ENHANCE THE BOROUGH’S ENVIRONMENTAL CAPITAL.

Justification

2.8 The planning system can contribute to the objective of ensuring that development and growth are sustainable. Decisions in the planning field should not deny future generations the best of today’s environment. The Borough’s environmental capital includes its land, air and water resources, its landscape and built environment. The aims of this policy are supported by Government planning guidance such as PPG9, PPG15 and PPG23. In addition there are European Directives on environmental statements which the Government has taken forward into legislation. The Council’s Supplementary Planning Guidance Note for Sustainable Development provides further guidance on this subject.

LONDON AND SOUTH WEST LONDON SUB-REGIONAL POLICY CONTEXT

POLICY ST.5: KEY FEATURES AND ASSETS
THE COUNCIL WILL PROMOTE POLICIES AND PROPOSALS WHICH REFLECT THE NEEDS OF SOUTH WEST LONDON, IN PARTICULAR THROUGH A NETWORK OF TOWN CENTRES, NEW ORBITAL PUBLIC TRANSPORT LINKAGES, STRATEGIC EMPLOYMENT AREAS, OPEN SPACES, GREEN CHAINS AND REGENERATION STRATEGIES ALONG THE WANDLE VALLEY.

Justification

2.9 The Council wishes to co-ordinate its planning policies with those of adjoining Boroughs in order to ensure that they reflect the wider needs of south west London. Structural elements at a strategic level include the area’s network of town centres, whose catchment areas extend beyond Borough boundaries and often overlap. New orbital public transport links are required to link town centres, employment areas and radial transport routes in order to provide a more integrated transport network. Merton also contains major open spaces (including publicly available playing fields) and employment areas of strategic significance which require special protection and improvement to ensure they maintain that significance.

2.10 Government guidance and Strategic Planning Guidance for London encourage UDP’s to consider their wider strategic roles. These aims are identified in the UDP Strategy in chapter 1 and are expressed in Fig. 1.2.
POLICY ST.6: THE WANDLE VALLEY

THE COUNCIL WILL PROMOTE A PLANNING STRATEGY FOR THE WANDLE VALLEY AND TOWN CENTRES TO PROVIDE A STRUCTURAL FRAMEWORK FOR INVESTMENT AND REGENERATION.

Justification

2.11 As part of a spatial planning strategy for south west London the Council wishes to promote co-ordinated policies and strategies in the Wandle Valley Corridor. This area has been identified by Government as a strategic resource which requires regeneration to realise its full potential for London. The Council will work in partnership with other Local Authorities and organisations to promote regeneration and environmental improvement in the Corridor. The Plan identifies a range of planning and transport policies to achieve these aims.

2.12 In November 1998 the Wandle Valley Partnership published its first comprehensive Regeneration Strategy. The Strategy sets out a vision for the area in 2010 and identifies 10 objectives. Policies in the Plan therefore seek to reflect the aims of the Strategy. A key feature of regeneration in the Wandle Valley is the recognition of its contribution to regeneration in South West London as a whole and the need for partnership to achieve its aims. These aims go beyond traditional land use planning but a central part of the Strategy is improvement of the environment and infrastructure.

URBAN REGENERATION AND REVITALISATION

POLICY ST.7: KEY AREAS FOR REVITALISATION

TOWN CENTRES AND MAIN EMPLOYMENT AREAS WILL BE THE FOCI FOR ECONOMIC ACTIVITY AND THE PROVISION OF FACILITIES IN ORDER TO ACHIEVE SUSTAINABLE REVITALISATION OF THE URBAN ENVIRONMENT. INVESTMENT IN INFRASTRUCTURE AND ENVIRONMENTAL IMPROVEMENTS WILL BE FOCUSED INTO THESE AREAS.

Justification

2.13 The Mayor's draft London Plan (Page 7, para 32, June 2002) identifies six objectives including, as objective 1, “making the most sustainable and efficient use of space in London; encouraging intensification and growth in areas of need and opportunity”. A key policy direction for achieving this objective is to promote an urban renaissance through “higher density and intensification in line with public transport capacity and leading to a high quality compact city, building upon London's existing urban quality and sense of place”. Also, Government investment is likely to be directed towards urban areas like Merton to enable renewal of residential and other areas which are in danger of deteriorating and on regenerating deprived areas. This could include the redevelopment of land especially where it is contaminated. Such development should focus on key areas of need and opportunity including town centres. Accordingly, the Council will identify measures and resources necessary to exploit opportunities for the early implementation of proposals for an urban renaissance.
2.14 A key aim of the Council is to promote the revitalisation of its town centres and main employment areas to ensure they help to meet the needs of all Borough residents and businesses and the wider needs of south west London. The Mayor’s draft London Plan (June 2002) identifies the Colliers Wood / South Wimbledon area in the South London sub-region as an appropriate area for intensification including higher density redevelopment schemes at key transport nodes of good accessibility and in town centres.

POLICY ST.8: COLLIERS WOOD

THE COUNCIL HAS IDENTIFIED COLLIERS WOOD AS AN URBAN CENTRE FOR COMMUNITY REGENERATION TO PROMOTE MIXED USE DEVELOPMENT AND ENVIRONMENTAL IMPROVEMENT.

Justification

2.15 This area is shown on the Proposals Map and includes a cluster of out-of-centre developments, development sites, other local facilities and a tube station. It was previously identified in the 1996 UDP as an “Area of Opportunity” and is now designated as an Urban Centre to reflect its unique characteristics. The Mayor’s draft London Plan (page 107, para. 2B.120) identifies Colliers Wood as a particularly important area for intensification, a planning framework for which should provide incentives for intensification of use, encouraging changes from currently inappropriately located retail provision to more sustainable business activities and improved public transport linkages.

2.16 The 1999 Town Centre Capacity Study, the findings of which the Council accepts, confirmed the need for a limit on the scale of future development at Colliers Wood, in particular for retailing. There is a need to regenerate the area in order to improve local facilities, housing, employment, environmental conditions and accessibility on foot. The area is historically important containing the remains of the 12th century Merton Priory. Colliers Wood is well served by public transport and the Council is proposing to further enhance public transport facilities. The area is therefore considered to provide a range of local facilities and to serve the wider area, but needs to be improved to provide a more sustainable pattern of development.

LIVING AND WORKING IN MERTON (SUSTAINABLE NEIGHBOURHOODS)

POLICY ST.9: QUALITY RESIDENTIAL AREAS

THE CHARACTER AND AMENITY OF ALL RESIDENTIAL AREAS IN THE BOROUGH WILL BE PROTECTED AND WHEREVER POSSIBLE SHOULD BE ENHANCED. AN IMPROVED QUALITY OF LIFE WILL BE SOUGHT THROUGH BETTER ACCESS TO AND PROVISION OF A WIDE RANGE OF SERVICES AND FACILITIES TO BE MADE AVAILABLE LOCALLY.
Chapter 2 • Strategic Planning Policies

2.17. Government planning guidance promotes quality residential areas, and seeks to make more efficient use of land whilst improving the quality and attractiveness of residential areas. Guidance on sustainable development adds to the importance of providing facilities for residential areas and supporting quality of life aims. The Government has published “A New Deal for Communities” which highlights the linkages between problems and emphasises the need for co-ordinated action and policy.

2.18. Merton has extensive residential areas with a range of housing types, tenures and quality. The maintenance and optimum use of existing housing will be the first priority for the UDP, but where required the Plan supports new housing development and regeneration of existing areas. The Plan seeks to support measures to secure the improvement of the Borough’s housing stock to meet identified needs, and to reduce levels of unfitness, lack of amenities, disrepair and vacancy. The Plan also seeks to ensure that facilities associated with residential areas are maintained and improved.

POLICY ST.10: MIXED USE NEIGHBOURHOODS

THE COUNCIL WILL BALANCE THE NEEDS FOR NEW HOUSING IN THE BOROUGH WITH A NEED FOR EMPLOYMENT AND OTHER SOCIAL/COMMUNITY FACILITIES. IT WILL PROMOTE MIXED USE SUSTAINABLE NEIGHBOURHOODS IN ORDER TO REDUCE THE NEED TO TRAVEL AND TO MEET A WIDE VARIETY OF RESIDENT’S NEEDS LOCALLY.

Justification

2.19. To promote sustainable patterns of living and working national planning guidance identifies a range of benefits of mixed use neighbourhoods. This guidance is included in PPG1, PPG3, PPG6, PPG12 and PPG13. Guidance is also contained in SERPLAN’s Sustainable Development Strategy for the South East. The DETR good practice advice, “Planning for Sustainable Development”, of October 1998 also provides useful examples of the benefits of mixed use areas.

2.20. This Plan seeks to ensure that neighbourhoods retain local facilities such as shops, health and community facilities, open spaces and venues for leisure and recreation, together with jobs without compromising high quality residential environments. Particular scope for mixed use development occurs in town and local centres and in mixed use frontages along main roads, but there are many other parts of the Borough where a mix of uses is suitable and will be encouraged. Where new development is promoted its potential to add to a mix of uses suited to each area will be assessed. Urban Village policies are promoted in those parts of the Borough, which have potential for this form of development. The Council’s Supplementary Planning Guidance Note for Sustainable Development provides further guidance on this subject.

POLICY ST.11: HOUSING PROVISION

PROVISION WILL BE MADE TO ACCOMMODATE ON AVERAGE AN ADDITIONAL 430 HOUSEHOLDS YEARLY. THIS LEVEL OF PROVISION APPLIES TO THE PERIOD 2001 TO 2016 AND IS SUBJECT TO REVIEW FOLLOWING ADOPTION OF THE MAYOR OF LONDON’S SPATIAL DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY.
RPG.3 includes a strategic housing target for the Borough for the period 1992-2006 of 5,000 dwellings. Revised Regional Planning Guidance for the South East (RPG.9) published in March 2001 provides strategic housing targets beyond 2006 and up to 2016. This requires Merton to provide an annual average of some 430 dwellings as a minimum target. The former LPAC's Housing Capacity Study identified potential sources of this provision in London, including the potential for extra housing from offices, large scale housing land, capacity in and above shops and from high density housing schemes. The Council will adopt a 'plan, monitor and manage' approach to continually review future housing provision and the ways it is meeting its housing target in accordance with guidance in PPG.3 (2000). The Council aims to achieve this target through a number of policies in the Plan including those resisting the loss of residential land or buildings either through development or change of use; encouraging high density housing in selected areas; and via the allocation of a range of sites in Part II of the Plan. The former LPAC advice suggests a five yearly review and monitor of UDP policies to assess their effectiveness and progress towards reconciling housing supply and demand.

With a steady increase in the number of households in Merton and a large pool of unmet housing needs both within and outside the Borough it is of paramount importance that the pressures to develop housing or housing land for alternative uses will therefore be resisted particularly in town centre areas where demands to displace residential uses are most intense.

POLICY ST.12: DEVELOPMENT ON PREVIOUSLY DEVELOPED LAND

THE COUNCIL WILL REQUIRE 95% OF ADDITIONAL HOUSING IN THE BOROUGH TO BE PROVIDED ON PREVIOUSLY DEVELOPED LAND.

Justification

PPG12 (Development Plans) requires local plans to include targets for housing developments on previously developed land. PPG3 sets a target that by 2008, 60% of additional housing should be provided on previously developed land. Regional Planning Guidance for the South East (RPG.9) sets a target for London Authorities to achieve over 80% of its housing development on previously developed land. PPG3 requires local planning authorities to adopt their own recycling targets in local plans which contribute towards meeting regional targets and are consistent with data from the urban housing capacity studies. Based on the Housing Capacity Study (1998/9) coordinated by LPAC this Council target is considered as a realistically achievable contribution towards meeting regional targets.

PPG3 requires the adoption of a sequential approach to the allocation and development of sites for housing with the presumption that previously developed sites should be developed before greenfield sites. The Guidance also sets out a number of criteria on which the suitability and potential of sites for allocation for housing should be assessed against. These include the availability of previously developed sites; the location and accessibility of sites; the capacity of existing and potential infrastructure; the ability to build communities and the physical and environmental constraints on development of land. The Council has regard to the requirements of PPG3 in the allocation and release of housing sites included in Schedule 1 of the Plan.
POLICY ST.13: HOUSING NEEDS

THE COUNCIL WILL SEEK PROVISION FOR A RANGE OF HOUSING TYPES AND TENURES TO MEET THE NEEDS OF ALL SECTORS OF THE COMMUNITY, INCLUDING THOSE UNABLE TO COMPETE FINANCIALLY IN THE HOUSING MARKET.

Justification

2.25 PPG3 (Housing), states that the housing and social needs of all communities needs to be recognised including those in need of affordable or special housing. The Council’s Housing Needs Study (April 1999), updated in 2001 identified a variety of housing needs and identified requirements for additional affordable dwellings. The Study found that an overall affordable housing target at 30% would be justified, the greatest proportion of which would need to be for social rented provision to meet identified needs. Low cost market housing, according to the study, is of very limited value in meeting housing need in the Borough.

2.26 Policies in Part II of the Plan aim to meet these housing needs. These policies include the need to provide affordable housing on sites smaller than previously identified in the Plan; the requirement for a mix of housing types and sizes; the provision of housing for older people; and the encouragement for new housing to be built to life time homes standards.

POLICY ST.14: EMPLOYMENT LAND

LAND IN DESIGNATED INDUSTRIAL AREAS WILL BE RETAINED FOR EMPLOYMENT PURPOSES. EMPLOYMENT LAND IN OTHER AREAS WILL ALSO BE PROTECTED AND LOSS OF SUCH LAND WILL BE PERMITTED ONLY UNDER LIMITED CIRCUMSTANCES.

Justification

2.27 For the purposes of the Plan, employment land is defined as land use for or last lawfully used for the purposes of any of the business uses: i.e. those uses falling within classes B1, B2, B8 of the Use Classes Order 1988. The amount of work (full time equivalent jobs) in the Borough has been falling for the past 30 years as the area’s potential for generating employment has declined (See Figure 2.1).

Demand for land for alternative uses such as retail warehousing and housing has fluctuated over this period, but at times of high demand it has resulted in a transfer of land away from employment uses. There has been considerable short term demand for new housing development on industrial land which is relatively cheap, even when it is providing jobs for the local community.
Between 1987 and 1997 Merton lost over 92,903m² (1,000,000 sq.ft.) of employment floorspace to housing and retailing. It is estimated that over this period 50 manufacturing businesses which were seeking to modernise their productive capacity chose to do so outside London and left the Borough. The offer of residential land prices providing premiums of between £3 million and £6 million per hectare over industrial land values has been a major factor in encouraging this emigration. The Plan and the Council's Economic Development Strategy seek to resist the loss of further employment land so that businesses and jobs which are required to sustain the quality of life in the Borough in the long term are not forced out of the Borough by short term increases in the price of industrial land due to “hope values” (See Figure 2.2). However, in protecting all employment land, Policy ST.14 does not protect the existing employment uses, and it does not mean that the environmental impact of different types of employment use are ignored. Indeed the policies of the plan seek to direct business uses of different types and sizes into different areas of the borough in accordance with a business location strategy which has both economic development and environmental aims. Broadly, this strategy seeks to direct general industry (B2) and storage and distribution (B8) to the designated Industrial Areas identified on the Proposals Map; large offices (B1) to the town centres and Colliers Wood; and light industrial workshops, studios and small offices, which are not likely to cause nuisance to residential neighbours, to the smaller employment sites scattered around the Borough.

**Figure 2.1**

1993 & 1997 Economically active figures are based on a London Research Centre projection of the population of working age.

2. 28 Between 1987 and 1997 Merton lost over 92,903m² (1,000,000 sq.ft.) of employment floorspace to housing and retailing. It is estimated that over this period 50 manufacturing businesses which were seeking to modernise their productive capacity chose to do so outside London and left the Borough. The offer of residential land prices providing premiums of between £3 million and £6 million per hectare over industrial land values has been a major factor in encouraging this emigration. The Plan and the Council's Economic Development Strategy seek to resist the loss of further employment land so that businesses and jobs which are required to sustain the quality of life in the Borough in the long term are not forced out of the Borough by short term increases in the price of industrial land due to “hope values” (See Figure 2.2). However, in protecting all employment land, Policy ST.14 does not protect the existing employment uses, and it does not mean that the environmental impact of different types of employment use are ignored. Indeed the policies of the plan seek to direct business uses of different types and sizes into different areas of the borough in accordance with a business location strategy which has both economic development and environmental aims. Broadly, this strategy seeks to direct general industry (B2) and storage and distribution (B8) to the designated Industrial Areas identified on the Proposals Map; large offices (B1) to the town centres and Colliers Wood; and light industrial workshops, studios and small offices, which are not likely to cause nuisance to residential neighbours, to the smaller employment sites scattered around the Borough.
2.29 In the 10 years between 1984 and 1994 the stock of industrial floorspace in Merton fell by 357,000 sq.m to 709,000 sq.m. Since that time the rate of loss has slowed, and it is estimated that in 2002 the total stock of floorspace stood at 600,000 sq.m of which approximately 100,000 sq.m was outside the designated Industrial Areas. Although the Council wishes to increase the overall level of employment in the Borough, it is not seeking to increase the quantity of industrial floorspace in the Borough, but wishes to maintain it at roughly current levels. At the same time it wishes to facilitate the modernisation, adaptation and redevelopment of the stock to meet current business needs. The Council accepts that this modernisation process may in some cases result in lower development densities and an overall decline in the quantity of floorspace. Indeed the Council estimates that the expected net reduction in the total amount of business floorspace arising from site proposals in Schedule 1 of the Plan alone will be 53,500 sq.m. This arises from the expected redevelopment of 42 hectares of land for exclusively business use or for mixed use purposes. This is a planned net loss. However, the Council also recognises that its resistance to loss of employment land on windfall sites (in order to allow modernisation of business space to occur), may also be associated with further reductions in overall floorspace levels.

POLICY ST.15: ENVIRONMENTALLY FRIENDLY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

The Council will encourage economic development which is environmentally sustainable at the same time as assisting in meeting the material needs of local residents.

Justification

2.30 Many manufacturing businesses in the Borough fail to achieve sustainability objectives. The Plan will therefore seek to encourage local employment opportunities which are sustainable.
2.31 It is possible to make small environment gains by modifying the behaviour of Merton firms without harming the economic (material) welfare of Merton residents or displacing unsustainable economic activity. The Plan places physical constraints on the nature, location and use of business premises. It aims to sustain the quality of life in Merton by ensuring that good quality employment is available to Merton’s residents with the minimum of travel. The Council’s Supplementary Planning Guidance Note for Sustainable Development provides further guidance on this subject.

POLICY ST.16: ECONOMIC DIVERSITY

THE COUNCIL WILL SEEK TO ENSURE THAT A WIDE RANGE OF JOBS IS AVAILABLE TO LOCAL PEOPLE AND THAT THE LOCAL ECONOMY DOES NOT BECOME OVER DEPENDENT ON PARTICULAR BUSINESS SECTORS.

Justification

2.32 In addition to its aim of increasing the overall amount of employment in the Borough, the Council will seek to facilitate the local availability of employment in a diverse range of business sectors in order to “insure” against unexpected changes in macro-economic conditions. There has been a loss of diversity in employment since 1981 and the Borough’s residents are becoming more dependent on fewer business sectors. There is a danger that if this process of specialisation continues the Borough’s economy will become less sustainable and less resilient in the face of wider economic changes. Moreover, in order to assist the process of social inclusion, the Council also wishes to promote diversity in the modes of enterprise, trading and business control within the local economy, particularly within the Borough’s relatively deprived neighbourhoods. Objective 3 of the Draft London Plan supports this Strategic Policy in seeking “a more prosperous city with strong and diverse growth”.

A SAFE, GREEN AND HEALTHY ENVIRONMENT

POLICY ST.17: BUILT ENVIRONMENT

THE COUNCIL WILL PROMOTE A HIGH QUALITY URBAN ENVIRONMENT TO STRENGTHEN THE ESTABLISHED CHARACTER AND TOWNSCAPE QUALITY OF THE BOROUGH THROUGH SECURING:

(i) HIGH STANDARDS OF DESIGN;

(ii) ACCESS FOR ALL GROUPS IN THE COMMUNITY TO BUILDINGS, SERVICES, LEISURE AND OPEN SPACES;

(iii) SUSTAINABLE FORMS OF BUILDINGS AND DEVELOPMENT;

(iv) A SAFE AND SECURE ENVIRONMENT.
2.33 Government planning guidance now promotes good design in the urban environment. PPG1 gives greater consideration to design and the appearance of development, whilst PPG6 advocates urban design as a mechanism for securing the future viability of town centres. The Urban Task Force Study, “An Urban Renaissance, June 1999, made recommendations to secure successful and sustainable urban living. Key findings of the study are likely to be incorporated into the forthcoming Urban White Paper. The Government, through English Heritage is also mindful of the economic benefits of heritage-led regeneration.

2.34 The Plan has regard to Government guidance and includes policies which aim to achieve improvements to the character and appearance of areas of distinctive quality, and of each of the Borough's town centres. Policies draw upon Merton’s Town Centre Capacity Study which support the need for environmental and accessibility improvements as part of regeneration initiatives in the town centres.

POLICY ST.18: HERITAGE

THE COUNCIL WILL PROTECT, PRESERVE OR ENHANCE ALL ASPECTS OF THE HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT, INCLUDING ITS CONSERVATION AREAS, STATUTORY AND LOCALLY LISTED BUILDINGS, SCHEDULED ANCIENT MONUMENTS, HISTORIC PARKS AND GARDENS, AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES.

Justification

2.35 The Council will also seek to promote a greater public understanding and enjoyment of the Borough's heritage, including wider public consultation in conservation issues.

2.36 In protecting the historic environment the Council will have regard to the Government's Sustainable Development Strategy and Planning Policy Guidance, particularly PPG15 Planning and the Historic Environment, 1994, and PPG16 Archaeology, 1995. It will work closely with English Heritage in promoting heritage-led regeneration.

POLICY ST.19: NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

SPORTS PITCHES, AREAS OF NATURE CONSERVATION IMPORTANCE, ALLOTMENTS, GREEN CHAINS, GREEN CORRIDORS AND OTHER AREAS OF OPEN SPACE THAT MAKE IMPORTANT CONTRIBUTION TO AMENITY, RECREATION AND/OR NATURE CONSERVATION WILL BE SAFEGUARDED AND, WHEREVER POSSIBLE, ENHANCED.

POLICY ST.20: METROPOLITAN OPEN LAND

THE PERMANENCE AND INTEGRITY OF METROPOLITAN OPEN LAND WHICH CONTRIBUTES TO THE PHYSICAL STRUCTURE OF LONDON OR WHICH CONTAINS FEATURES OR LANDSCAPE OF HISTORIC, RECREATIONAL OR NATURE CONSERVATION INTEREST OF STRATEGIC VALUE WILL BE PROTECTED AND OPPORTUNITIES WILL BE SOUGHT TO ENHANCE THE VALUE OF SUCH LAND.
Justification

2.37 The interaction of human beings with natural environments is important in terms of meeting their needs for a broad range of sensory experience. Open spaces represent a vital resource for re-shaping cities and making them attractive places in which to live. The ability to foster a desire for urban living is dependent upon being able to offer natural environments and open air leisure and recreational opportunities close to people’s homes within urban areas.

2.38 National and regional planning guidance requires Local Authorities to use planning powers to protect important open spaces and areas which are important for nature conservation and recreation.

2.39 The Metropolitan Open Land (MOL) policy is a protection for strategically important open spaces. MOL conforms to any of the following criteria:

- It contributes to the physical structure of London by being clearly distinguishable from the built up area:

- It includes open air facilities, especially for leisure, recreation, sport, arts and cultural activities and tourism, which serve the whole, or significant parts of London:

- It contains features or landscapes of historic, recreational, nature conservation or habitat interest, of value at a metropolitan or national level:

- It forms part of a green chain and meets one of the above criteria. Areas of MOL in Merton have been identified as a result of the preparation of the Merton MOL Study (1999).

POLICY ST.21: BIODIVERSITY

THE COUNCIL WILL CONSERVE AND ENHANCE THE BIODIVERSITY AND NATURAL HERITAGE OF THE BOROUGH FOR THE BENEFIT OF THE EXISTING AND FUTURE GENERATIONS.

Justification

2.40 The Government’s commitment to the Biodiversity Convention in 1992 includes habitat conservation, and requires that components of diversity should be used sustainably. The abundance of wildlife and wildlife habitats is an important element of a clean and healthy natural resources or environment, which is essential to the social and economic wellbeing of an area. The Council’s Supplementary Planning Guidance Note for Sustainable Development provides further guidance on this subject.

2.41 The preservation and enhancement of the Borough’s natural resources or endowment is one of the prime aims of the Council. It has prepared a Local Agenda 21 Action Plan and is working in partnership with others on a Local Biodiversity Action Plan for Merton. This will, together with the proposed London Biodiversity Action Plan, the UK Biodiversity Action Plan and policies for the protection and enhancement of habitats and species, be used to secure the protection of the natural heritage of the Borough.
POLICY ST.22: ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

The Council will encourage the development of renewable energy uses and will seek to minimise pollution levels, waste production, energy and water use and runoff, and will safeguard floodplains and watercourses.

Justification

2.42 Policies to protect the environment by minimising the use of energy and resources, minimising pollution and encouraging the development of renewable energy and recycling of resources are in accord with the principles of sustainable development. This is expressed generally through government guidance contained within the UK Sustainable Development Strategy and regionally through SERPLAN's Sustainable Development Strategy for the South East. The Council's Supplementary Planning Guidance Note for Sustainable Development provides further guidance on this subject. These principles are developed in Merton's LA 21 Action Plan, which is complementary to the UDP. Specifically, government guidance in PPG22 'Renewable Energy', encourages the development of renewable energy schemes where possible. The efficient use of energy and the development of renewable energy is supported by the Objectives outlined in Topic 4, 'Energy', of Merton's Sustainability Criteria described in Chapter 1 of the Plan.

2.43 PPG23 'Planning and Pollution Control' and PPG24 'Planning and Noise' encourage land use planning policies to minimise the pollution of land, air and water environments and to control unacceptably noisy developments. In relation to air pollution, the government has produced the National Air Quality Strategy and the Council is developing its own Air Quality Action Plan. Topic 5 of Merton's Sustainability Criteria, 'Air, Water, Noise, Light', supports the conservation of water resources and minimisation of pollution. The aim of reducing air pollution is specifically developed in Sustainability Targets and Indicators for eight key pollutants, outlined in Chapter 1.

2.44 RG3, the former LPAC Advice and PPG10 on Waste, support the proximity principle and use of Best Practical Environmental Option (BPEO) for dealing with waste whenever possible. The Council will take account of any advice that may emerge from regional bodies such as SERPLAN or technical advisory bodies. The Council supports the development of waste management facilities which make use of the following hierarchy as outlined in the former LPAC's Supplementary Planning Advice on Waste (1998): Minimisation; Re-use; Recycle; Energy Recovery; Disposal. It is considered that this hierarchy best reflects the unique situation of London, where the potential for recycling is greater than in the country as a whole. The Council supports the development of a regional recycling-led strategy as set out in the former LPAC document. The Council has included these principles in the Waste Management Plan, the LA21 Action Plan and in the Objectives identified under Topic 3 'Waste', of Merton's Sustainability Criteria in Chapter 1 of this UDP. Part II of the UDP contains details of how these waste policies will be implemented in development proposals.
2.45 PPG25 ‘Development and Flood Risk’ sets out guidance on the management and reduction of flood risk. Development plans should apply the precautionary principle to the issue of flood risk and apply a sequential approach that directs authorities and developers towards sites with lower risks. This risk-based search sequence seeks to avoid flood risk where possible and where not possible to manage it. The guidance recognises the importance of regeneration and redevelopment of previously developed land and advises how these aims should take account of flood risk. Flood risk is expected to increase as a result of climate change and planning policies should recognise that flood risk and its management need to be applied on a whole-catchment basis.

POLICY ST 23: ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

THE PRECAUTIONARY PRINCIPLE WILL BE APPLIED TO THE ISSUE OF FLOOD RISK. IN ALLOCATING OR PERMITTING SITES FOR DEVELOPMENT, THE SEQUENTIAL TEST WILL BE ADOPTED AND PRIORITY GIVEN TO LAND IN LOWER RISK ZONES.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF FLOODPLAINS WILL BE PROTECTED. THE CAPACITY OF WATERCOURSES WILL BE SAFEGUARDED BY PROMOTING THE USE IN APPROPRIATE AREAS OF SUSTAINABLE DRAINAGE SYSTEMS TO CONTROL THE SURFACE WATER AS NEAR TO THE SOURCE AS POSSIBLE.

2.46 Government advice in PPG25 sets out that local planning authorities should adopt a risk based approach to plan preparation and decisions on development control through a sequential test. Local planning authorities should give priority in allocating or permitting sites for development in descending order to the flood zones set out in Table 1 (PPG25). The flood zones in Table 1 are; Zone 1 ‘little or no risk’ (annual probability of flooding is less than 0.1%) there are no constraints on development due to river, tidal or coastal flooding, Zone 2 ‘low to medium risk’ (annual probability of flooding is 0.1 to 1%) suitable for most development, flood risk assessments should be provided with applications, Zone 3 ‘high risk’ (annual probability of flooding is 1% or greater). Zone 3 has three sub zones, 3(a) ‘developed areas’ may be suitable for residential, commercial and industrial development provided appropriate flood defences are included, 3(b) ‘undeveloped and sparsely developed areas’ generally not suitable for residential, commercial and industrial development unless a particular location is essential (e.g for agriculture and essential transport and utilities infrastructure) and an alternative lower risk location is not available, and 3(c) ‘functional flood plains’ suitable for some recreation, sport, amenity and nature conservation but built development should be wholly exceptional and limited to essential transport and utilities infrastructure.

2.47 It is important to note that the flood zones in Table 1 cover only river, tidal and coastal flooding. Locally in all zones an assessment may be needed of the risk of groundwater flooding, overland sheet flow or run off exceeding the capacity of drainage systems during prolonged or intense rainfall. Areas with 1% or greater annual probability of flooding are identified on the Proposals Map. Information on those areas with 0.1% or greater annual probability of flooding will not be available from the Environment Agency until May 2004. As information and advice from the Environment Agency becomes available the Council will make this information available to the public in SPG. Until this information is available the Environment Agency can advise whether a site falls within a ‘little or no risk’, ‘low to medium’ or ‘high’ risk flood zone.
POLICY ST.24: LEISURE AND RECREATION, ARTS AND CULTURE

THE COUNCIL WILL SEEK TO IMPROVE THE QUALITY AND RANGE OF LEISURE, RECREATION, SPORTS, ARTS AND CULTURE FACILITIES IN APPROPRIATE LOCATIONS AND TO PROTECT EXISTING FACILITIES.

Justification

2.48 RPG3 refers to the need to protect the leisure, recreation and sports facilities in London. Merton has a strategic role in providing playing fields for use by people from the wider south-west London area. RPG3 also recognises the contribution of the arts and cultural activities to the capital. Such activities can be significant employment generators and contribute to the economic regeneration, vitality and viability of areas. Encouragement of such activities is in accord with the former LPAC's vision of a strong economy and a good quality of life and provision of opportunities for all Londoners. The promotion of all types of leisure, including sport and cultural activities, is important for the general health and quality of life of the population. This can therefore make an important contribution towards Merton's sustainability objectives of achieving equity and providing cultural, leisure and social opportunities for all.

2.49 Policies ST.26-ST.28 outline the Council's approach to development in relation to the hierarchy of town centres. Part II of the UDP contains policies relating to different forms and locations of leisure developments. These policies emphasise the need to restrain car use and to encourage leisure facilities in accessible locations as suggested by government guidance PPG6, PPG13 and the former LPAC's Supplementary Advice on Large Scale Leisure.

POLICY ST.25: TOURISM

THE DEVELOPMENT OF SUITABLE TOURIST ATTRACTIONS, ACCOMMODATION AND FACILITIES WILL BE PERMITTED WHERE THEY ARE NOT DETRIMENTAL TO THE CHARACTER AND AMENITY OF THE AREA. EXISTING TOURIST FACILITIES WILL BE PROTECTED.

Justification

2.50 During the 1990's the government has increasingly recognised the importance of tourism to the economy. This is detailed in the new Tourism Strategy for England, "Tomorrow's Tourism", which lists the benefits as generating wealth, creating jobs, promoting entrepreneurship and providing social and environmental benefits and supporting local diversity and cultural traditions.

2.51 The Council's Economic Development Strategy and Tourism Strategy recognise the scope for attracting visitors and their expenditure to Merton's town centres and attractions as a means of supporting other local facilities. Encouraging suitable and sustainable tourist attractions means that the local community should also benefit from their development. Strategic Guidance for London Planning Authorities (RPG3) supports a positive approach especially in encouraging hotel development in different price ranges, and encourages Borough's to prepare policies for the development of accommodation that will be acceptable to visitors, benefit the local economy and be accessible to public transport.

2.52 Facilities will be encouraged in locations that are accessible by a variety of transport, including walking and cycling as well as public transport, Part II of the UDP contains further details on transport policies.
SUCCESSFUL TOWN CENTRES AND SHOPPING

POLICY ST.26: TOWN CENTRES

THE COUNCIL WILL PROMOTE A HIERARCHY OF TOWN CENTRES IN MERTON AS THE MAIN FOCUS FOR SHOPPING AND A WIDE RANGE OF MIXED USE FACILITIES AND ACTIVITIES WITH GOOD PUBLIC TRANSPORT ACCESS.

Justification

2.53 During the 1990's Government guidance has increasingly recognised the importance of town centres as locations for shopping and a wide range of uses, and sought to restrict large scale car based development outside town centres. This new policy guidance detailed in PPG6, and added to in other guidance, such as PPG13, is consistent with the Government's strategy for sustainable development and the regeneration of urban areas. Strategic Planning Guidance for London supports this approach and identifies a hierarchy and network of town centres with Wimbledon identified as a Major Centre. The network is flexible and should reflect current circumstances. For the purpose of this plan, Wimbledon, Morden, and Mitcham are Town Centres as defined in Annex A of PPG6 1996.

2.54 It is a key aim of Merton's UDP to promote the improvement and regeneration of its town centres. A major study of Merton's town centres has been carried out in 1999 to guide policies and proposals in this Plan. It has identified a hierarchy of centres as set out below where a range of different policies and proposals are advocated for specific centres and detailed guidance for each centre is therefore set out in this Plan. The aim is to ensure that local needs are met locally and that the strengths and opportunities in each centre are recognised and supported. A key element of town centre policy is to integrate transport policy and the Plan includes policies to achieve this aim.

2.55 Where development of town centre uses is proposed, the Council's strategy to locate these uses is set out in Part II of the Plan. Development should be directed to town centres. The scale of development should respect the character of each centre. It should also have regard to its affect on the vitality and viability of the centre. Development for town centre uses should also take account of any transport implications and ensure the development is suitably located for pedestrians. In accordance with guidance in PPG6 the Council will treat edge of centre proposals as those that are within an easy walking distance of the core (primary in PPG6) shopping area. The limits will be determined by local topography, including barriers to pedestrians, such as major roads and car parks, the strength of attraction of the town centre and the attractiveness of the route to or from the town centre. However, the Council will take account of the advice in PPG6 that most shoppers are unlikely to walk more than 200 to 300 metres, especially when carrying shopping.
Chapter 2 • Strategic Planning Policies

POLICY ST.27: WIMBLEDON TOWN CENTRE

THE COUNCIL WILL ACTIVELY PROMOTE THE VITALITY, VIABILITY AND CHARACTER OF WIMBLEDON TOWN CENTRE AS A MAJOR CENTRE AND AS THE PRINCIPAL TOWN CENTRE IN THE BOROUGH.

Justification

2.56 Wimbledon is identified as a major centre in Strategic Planning Guidance for London and this policy seeks to recognise its role within the London town centre hierarchy and ensure that appropriate policies and investment take place in accordance with the former LPACs theme of consolidation.

2.57 The future vitality of Wimbledon is essential in order to provide Merton’s residents with nearby employment, shopping, arts, cultural, leisure, entertainment and tourist facilities without the need to travel to other town centres. The Council will balance the development of Wimbledon against the needs of nearby town, district and local centres in order to ensure that new facilities complement rather than compete with these areas. In enhancing the vitality of the town centre the Council will seek to protect and enhance its townscape character.

POLICY ST.28: MITCHAM AND MORDEN TOWN CENTRES

THE COUNCIL WILL ACTIVELY PROMOTE THE REGENERATION OF MITCHAM AND MORDEN TOWN CENTRES AND ENCOURAGE THEIR DIVERSIFICATION AND ENVIRONMENTAL ENHANCEMENT, TOGETHER WITH IMPROVED ACCESS, WITH A VIEW TO BRINGING ABOUT INVESTMENT AND CREATING ATTRACTIVE CENTRES OF VALUE TO LOCAL RESIDENTS.

Justification

2.58 Government planning guidance in PPG6 and in RPG3 promotes a hierarchy of town centres. These centres are a key part of this hierarchy and are identified as centres that have traditionally provided convenience goods and services for local customers. In terms of shopping floorspace they typically range in size from 10,000m² to 50,000m². Comparison shopping floorspace rarely exceeds 50% of the total. Their basic attraction is that they are easy and pleasant for local people to use. Some have attracted individual specialist shops or functions including restaurants.

2.59 Both Mitcham and Morden have been identified as fulfilling this role for a long time. The 1999 Town Centre Capacity Study has updated the Council’s analysis of these centres. This showed that both centres meet the criteria for designation as District Centres although their retailing role has been in decline. Mitcham contains 25,175m² and Morden 27,500m² of retail and related service floorspace at December 1998. Of this total about 30% is convenience shopping in both centres and comparison shopping is less than 35%.

2.60 The scale of development for retail and other town centre uses should reflect the needs of each centre and support their vitality and viability. Site proposals have been identified to meet these needs and policy ST.26 provides further general guidance on the form and location of town centre development. Policies in Part II provide more detailed guidance on the scale of development suited to each centre. In Mitcham, Urban Village policies provide specific advice on the need for small scale, mixed use development.
POLICY ST.29: DEVELOPMENT OUTSIDE DESIGNATED CENTRES

A need for development of town centre uses outside Merton's designated town centres has not been identified. Therefore outside the designated centres, a need for a development for a town centre use and a sequential approach to site selection has to be demonstrated. In large developments a high level of public transport accessibility must be available.

Justification

2.61 Government and strategic planning guidance seek to limit development outside town centres which could locate in or on the edge of town or district centres, in particular in order to reduce car use and encourage the regeneration of town centres. Advice in PPG6 and PPG13 requires Council's to apply a sequential approach to the location of development and to assess the need for development as a basis for new policies. The Council supports new guidance to focus development on its designated centres and will resist development outside these centres which could locate in or on their edge.

2.62 As indicated in paragraph 2.54 a town centre study has been carried out to fulfil the requirements in PPG6 and to guide policies and proposals in this Plan. This study does not indicate any demand or need for major retail or leisure development outside Merton’s town centres. Proposals for development outside designated centres in Merton will therefore only be likely to have any prospect of being given favorable considerations in exceptional circumstances, where the proposal complies with policies ST.29 and TC.2 in particular. Therefore the Council has not identified any sites for town centre uses outside its designated centres. These centres include town and local centres. Any exceptions to this policy must be located in areas with high levels of public transport accessibility as indicated on Figure 6.5 with level 4 and above. These areas are well served by public transport in accordance with guidance in PPG6 and PPG13.

POLICY ST.30: LOCAL SHOPPING

The Council will seek to maintain a widespread distribution of local shopping facilities.

Justification

2.63 Government guidance in PPG6 supports the provision of local shopping facilities. This approach is also supported in Strategic Planning Guidance and is consistent with sustainable development aims. This guidance supports local shopping facilities for people's day to day needs and to help reduce dependence on the car. Local facilities contribute to reducing social exclusion from services and bring particular benefits to the elderly and young people. The Government is encouraging retailers to be flexible with their store formats to meet the needs of local communities.

2.64 Merton has a wide distribution of local shopping centres and parades which the Council will seek to retain and improve in order to provide choice and easily available local facilities. These facilities should include appropriately sized local supermarkets, key shops such as post offices and pharmacies and other local services to meet the day to day needs of residents, employees and visitors. Local shopping facilities can help to reduce the need to travel and limit car use to help bring environmental benefits. Policy S.4 provides the detailed guidance on the provision of local shops in the Borough. The aim is that the essential local shops are located within 500m of every residence.
SUSTAINABLE TRANSPORT

2.65 The Council recognizes the need to encourage the use of sustainable travel modes to reduce congestion and negative environmental impacts through its own policies and their interaction with the Regional Transport Strategy and Government policies.

2.66 In developing its own sustainable transport policies the Council seeks to reflect the objectives and priorities of the Regional Transport Strategy, as part of RPG9, as well as the Mayor’s Transport Strategy and the Government’s 10 Year Transport Plan.

2.67 Policy T1 of RPG9 requires Councils to develop policies which minimise travel distances while offering choice and accessibility, ensuring that the whole community (including disabled people) has the mobility required to meet their needs.

2.68 It is through the Council’s Local Implementation Plan and Borough Spending Plan that these policy objectives are delivered, through schemes and initiatives that promote sustainable travel options and choice. Projects are developed for funding through Transport for London, which must meet their critical assessment against the Mayor’s Transport Strategy. The need to ensure clear linkages between sustainable transport objectives and local scheme design is recognised in the ILIP.

2.69 By adopting a transport hierarchy the Council can fully consider development proposals in the context of national, regional and local policy objectives. Where the Council has accepted the private car, it is given the lowest priority and walking and cycling are considered first:

- Walking and Cycling
- Public Transport
- Taxis
- Commercial Vehicles
- Motorcycles
- Private Cars

POLICY ST.31: LAND USE/TRANSPORT INTEGRATION

THE POLICIES IN MERTON’S UDP PROMOTE THE INTEGRATION OF TRANSPORT AND LAND USE PLANNING WITH THE OBJECTIVES OF:

(i) INCREASING THE ATTRACTION AND USE OF WALKING, CYCLING AND PUBLIC TRANSPORT;
(ii) RESTRaining NON ESSENTIAL PRIVATE CAR MOVEMENTS;
(iii) IMPROVING ENVIRONMENTAL CONDITIONS AND ROAD SAFETY;
(iv) ENHANCING ACCESSIBILITY TO JOBS, SHOPPING AND OTHER ACTIVITIES IN MERTON;
(v) REDUCING TRAVEL DEMAND.
2.70 Advice contained in PPG13 (Transport) details how local authorities should integrate transport and land use planning. The Guidance aims to ensure that local authorities implement their land use policies and transport strategies in ways which reduce the growth in the length and number of motorised journeys, encourage means of travel that have less environmental impact and reduce the reliance on the private car.

2.71 The policies in the Plan support these aims and will assist in meeting the commitment in the Government’s Sustainable Development Strategy to reduce the use of and reliance on the private car and reduce the overall environmental impact of transport.

POLICY ST.32: TRAFFIC RESTRAINT/REDUCTION

THE COUNCIL WILL SEEK TO REDUCE OVERALL TRAFFIC VOLUMES, PARTICULARLY THE USE OF THE PRIVATE CAR, WHilst MAINTAINING THE ABILITY OF INDIVIDUALS TO ACCESS ACTIVITIES. THIS WILL BE ACHIEVED BY:

(i) ENSURING MAJOR DEVELOPMENT THAT ATTRACTS LARGE NUMBERS OF TRIPS IS LOCATED IN AREAS WELL SERVED BY PUBLIC TRANSPORT;

(ii) ACHIEVING A MIX OF DEVELOPMENT THAT MAXIMISES THE OPPORTUNITY FOR WALKING, CYCLING AND PUBLIC TRANSPORT;

(iii) RESTRAINING PRIVATE CAR MOVEMENTS THROUGH PARKING CONTROL AND OTHER MEASURES SUCH AS TRAVEL PLANS;

Justification

2.72 The Road Traffic Reduction Act 1997 obliges local authorities to assess traffic levels and set targets for reducing traffic, or its rate of growth, in their area. As a result of the requirements of the Environment Act 1995 the Council is also obliged to implement measures aimed at improving air quality in the Borough. The Council wishes to assist London’s Mayor with his aim of establishing formal guidance on the application within Greater London of the Road Traffic Reduction Act 1997. At this stage it is envisaged that Merton can make a significant contribution to the process and in the short term the Council aims to stabilise the growth of traffic in the Borough and then in the medium to long term progress proposals for achieving actual reductions in the growth of road traffic levels with the associated setting of targets in the Local Implementation Plan.

Complementary measures to the road user-charging scheme proposed for central London are key to this process.

2.73 The Council requires developers to demonstrate that their development is adequately served by a variety of modes of transport. The Council will take particular account of access on foot, by cycle and public transport to minimise road traffic. If development is not well served then a contribution will be sought by negotiation towards the provision of alternative means of travel, parking controls and traffic calming measures. If the Council is satisfied that a major development attracting large numbers of trips will be in an area well served by public transport at such time as to serve such developments, then criterion ST.32(i) would be met. However, it will not be possible to make all development acceptable in transport terms and consequently development that is simply in the wrong location or is of an inappropriate size or use will be refused planning permission.
POLICY ST.33: GREEN TRANSPORT

THE COUNCIL WILL PROMOTE, ENCOURAGE AND PROVIDE IMPROVED FACILITIES FOR PEDESTRIANS AND CYCLISTS IN MERTON THROUGH POLICIES WHICH RECOGNISE THE IMPORTANCE OF WALKING AND CYCLING AND THE INTRODUCTION OF A RANGE OF MEASURES TO IMPROVE THEIR SAFETY AND CONVENIENCE.

Justification

2.74 Boroughs have a responsibility for providing good quality facilities for pedestrians and cyclists. A better quality environment for both pedestrians and cyclists can encourage more people to make trips by these forms of transport which in turn can make a significant contribution towards a more sustainable transport system.

2.75 The Council will introduce a comprehensive set of measures to increase walking in the Borough including the identification of pedestrian priority areas, locations for pedestrian demonstration projects and the implementation of a programme of safer routes to school. Cycling is economical, efficient, environmentally friendly and healthy and the Council will encourage and support safe cycling through the progression of a range of measures including the implementation of the London Cycle Network. Since over a half of all trips made are under 5 kilometres in length there is significant potential for modal shift away from car use to the bicycle.

POLICY ST.34: PUBLIC TRANSPORT

THE COUNCIL WILL ENCOURAGE AND PROMOTE THE RETENTION, EXTENSION AND IMPROVEMENT OF PUBLIC TRANSPORT SERVICES AND FACILITIES TO MEET THE DEMAND FOR TRAVEL FOR MOST JOURNEYS IN MERTON AND, IN PARTICULAR, TO SERVE MAJOR DEVELOPMENT AND TOWN CENTRES.

Justification

2.76 As is the case for many other outer London Boroughs, public transport in Merton is sometimes less convenient than the use of the private car for most journeys. However, the government now seems to be recognising the need for greater investment in public transport to provide an adequate network to serve the area and to provide a realistic and viable alternative to the car.

2.77 The Council is pressing for the maintenance and improvement of public transport services and facilities to serve major development and meet both the local and regional needs. This will be achieved by supporting the provision of a variety of types of new services and improvements to stations, stops and passenger facilities and the better integration of the various public transport services. The Council will continue to work in partnership with both public transport operators and developers in linking development sites with improved public transport infrastructure and interchange points.
POLICY ST.35: PARKING

THE COUNCIL WILL, IN CONJUNCTION WITH NEIGHBOURING BOROUGHS, ADOPT A RESTRAINT BASED APPROACH TO CAR PARKING WHICH PLACES MAXIMUM LIMITS ON THE LEVELS OF OFF STREET PARKING ASSOCIATED WITH NEW DEVELOPMENT AND RESTRICTS COMMUTER AND OTHER LONG TERM CAR PARKING.

Justification

2.78 Strategic Planning Guidance for London Planning Authorities states that the amount of traffic generated by new developments should be minimised by placing maximum limits on the levels of off-street car parking spaces permitted and that where possible parking provision in existing developments should be brought into line when redevelopment takes place or through negotiation. It also advises that Boroughs should work towards a comprehensive and consistent approach to on-street parking restrictions, including the co-ordination of controlled parking zones and special parking areas. The Council’s Supplementary Planning Guidance Note for Sustainable Development provides further guidance on this subject.

2.79 Parking policies and standards in Merton seek to limit car use and encourage alternative means of travel which have less environmental impact. Parking control is used as a method of restraining the use of cars, particularly for commuting in the peak hours. The aim is to provide and manage a balanced supply of on-street and off-street parking spaces for different types of uses, to reduce accidents, to restrain traffic for environmental reasons and to satisfy the needs of town centres, businesses and residential areas.

IMPLEMENTING THE STRATEGY AND MEASURING PERFORMANCE

POLICY ST.36: COMMUNITY BENEFITS

THE COUNCIL WILL SEEK TO SECURE, THROUGH PLANNING OBLIGATIONS, COMMUNITY BENEFITS IN ACCORDANCE WITH RELEVANT POLICIES IN THE PLAN, TAKING ACCOUNT OF CURRENT GOVERNMENT GUIDANCE AND THE CIRCUMSTANCES OF EACH DEVELOPMENT.

Justification

2.80 Government guidance is set out in Circular 1/97. PPG12 states that where a planning authority expects developers to enter into planning obligations on a regular basis, in relation to similar types of development, they should set out their policy in their local plan. Other PPGs give guidance on circumstances where planning obligations may be required, including PPG13 on funding public transport facilities. The Government has indicated in “Modernising Planning” its intention to review policy on planning obligations.

2.81 Detailed guidance is therefore set out in Part II of this Plan in relation to specific types of development where planning obligations will be sought.