3.39 Some locations will not be suitable for the residential element of live/work unit development especially where there are employment uses in the locality which could be detrimental to residential amenities or cause nuisance to the residents. It will also be important that the residential element does not prejudice those employment uses in terms of their expansion, adaptation or change in those uses.

HOUSING

HOUSING PROVISION

3.40 Government planning guidance, including that in revised PPG3, 2000, and in Strategic Planning Guidance for London, seeks to ensure that everyone should have the opportunity of a decent home and that there should be greater choice of housing and social integration. New housing should contribute to improving the quality of urban life and make a significant contribution to promoting urban renaissance.

3.41 Planning policies should provide sufficient housing, and guidance in PPG3 indicates how this could be achieved by Councils. This includes an emphasis on recycling urban land, promoting mixed use development and socially mixed communities, reducing parking and where appropriate, increasing densities and creating more attractive residential environments.

POLICY HP.1: HOUSING TARGET

PROVISION WILL BE MADE TO ACCOMMODATE THE 430 ADDITIONAL HOMES ANNUALLY FROM THE FOLLOWING SOURCES:

(i) ALLOCATION OF NEW LAND FOR HOUSING

(ii) RE-USE OF UNDERUSED OR VACANT LAND AND BUILDINGS NOT AlLOCATED OR REQUIRED FOR OTHER PURPOSES

(iii) PREVIOUSLY DEVELOPED LAND

SCHEDULE 1 AND THE PROPOSALS MAP IDENTIFY THE SITES ALLOCATED FOR HOUSING AND MIXED USE PURPOSES. ON SITES ALLOCATED FOR RESIDENTIAL ONLY, PLANNING PERMISSION WILL NOT BE GRANTED FOR NON-RESIDENTIAL USES, OTHER THAN FOR THE ACCOMMODATION OF COMMUNITY FACILITIES ANCILLARY TO A RESIDENTIAL AREA.

3.42 The Government requires that targets are set for the number of additional housing units which should be provided in the period of the Plan and to monitor their provision. For this Plan the period is 2001-2011. Revised Regional Planning Guidance for the South East (RPG9) which was published in March 2001 provides targets up to 2016 which rolls forward the RPG3 targets to the new Plan period. These targets should be regarded as minimum ones. Policy ST.11 provides the strategic context for housing provision in Merton.
3.43 Sites for housing have been specifically set aside where they can be identified as appropriate for housing development and contribute towards meeting the Borough's housing capacity requirements. These sites are shown on the Proposals Map and Schedule 1. There are a significantly greater number of site proposals that include housing compared to the adopted UDP of 1996. This Plan gives increased emphasis to mixed use development. In total there are an estimated 7.83ha of housing only sites and 47.22ha of mixed use sites that include housing. They include a number of large site proposals and surplus school sites for which their exact potential for housing will be confirmed at the planning application stage.

3.44 In addition new windfall sites for housing are continuing to come forward from a wide variety of sources. To reflect this a number of policies have been included to support housing development on windfall sites where the former use has ceased. In addition with policies that support higher densities of housing in certain areas the potential to make more efficient use of relatively low density housing areas has been enhanced and this is expected to form an increasing proportion of new windfall sites.

3.45 The Government's advice in PPG3 and Strategic Planning Guidance for London, 1996, requires that Boroughs demonstrate how they have had regard to the requirement to provide the maximum number of dwellings subject to the maintenance of a quality environment. The Government has increased the requirement concerning the proportion of new homes built on previously developed land in order to promote the efficient use of land, regeneration in urban areas and to minimise development on greenfields sites. In London over 80% of new housing is on recycled land.

3.46 The Council has identified that most new housing in Merton has been secured from recycling urban land, including from windfall sites, vacant units over shops, disused offices and residential conversions. Given the finite availability of land, particularly regarding large scale sites and rising demand for additional houses in Merton, the option of recycling and re-using urban land will increasingly have to be encouraged to meet the Borough's housing demand requirements. The Council wishes to encourage new housing on brownfield sites, but not at the expense of other important land uses such as open spaces, private amenity spaces, employment, or local biodiversity.

**POLICY HP.2: RETENTION OF RESIDENTIAL ACCOMMODATION**

Planning permission will not be granted for a proposal that would lead to the loss of existing residential use of land, or buildings except under the following circumstances:

(i) Where the site is indicated on the Proposals Map for a non-residential use; but in town centres, residential uses will be preserved where practicable and promoted as part of new developments;

(ii) Where external environmental conditions are very poor and cannot be mitigated by alterations to the existing building or by external works or in the design of a residential development;

(iii) For the accommodation of community and health facilities ancillary to a residential area, such as doctors or dentists or child care facilities, where it can be shown that there is a justified need for such uses;
(iv) WHERE IT CAN BE DEMONSTRATED THAT A LISTED OR HISTORICALLY OR ARCHITECTURALLY
IMPORTANT BUILDING IS NO LONGER CAPABLE OF CONTINUING IN RESIDENTIAL USE AND IT
WOULD BEST BE RETAINED THROUGH A CHANGE OF USE (SEE ALSO POLICY MU.2);

(iv) THE PROPOSAL WOULD LEAD TO A NET INCREASE IN HOUSING ACCOMMODATION
ON THE SITE.

Justification

3.47 It is evident that the Borough continues to experience severe demands on its housing
stock. When account is taken of the fitness of the existing stock, the number of
concealed households in the Borough, and the levels of overcrowding, the continuing
shortage of suitable residential accommodation in Merton is unchanged. Demographic
changes, arising within the Borough, have added to the requirement. The retention of the
existing stock and protection of residential land is therefore sensible husbandry of a
scarce resource, but is modified by exceptions to allow a controlled release of
accommodation least appropriate for residential purposes. The exceptions include
consideration of ancillary community facilities and health care provision which may be
required to meet the objectives of the Government's health care policy with regard to
Care in the Community. This policy together with the allocation of land for new
development and the contribution from small unidentified sites and conversions leads to
a balance between providing for locally generated housing requirements and making a
modest contribution to meeting the demands of the regional housing market.

POLICY HP.3: REHABILITATION AND VACANT DWELLINGS

VACANT DWELLINGS OR DWELLINGS IN POOR CONDITION SHOULD BE REFURBISHED.
REDEVELOPMENT OF VACANT DWELLINGS, OR OF DWELLINGS IN POOR CONDITION, WILL
BE PERMITTED ONLY WHERE:

(i) REDEVELOPMENT WILL LEAD TO ENVIRONMENTAL OR SOCIAL BENEFITS;

(ii) REHABILITATION OF THE LAND OR BUILDINGS IS NOT ECONOMICAL OR PRACTICAL;

(iii) THE PROPOSAL WILL LEAD TO A NET INCREASE IN HOUSING ACCOMMODATION;

(iv) REDEVELOPMENT WILL MEET A PARTICULAR HOUSING NEED.

Justification

3.48 The majority of older houses are not structurally unsound but require either
improvement to basic facilities or, increasingly, attention to elements of disrepair.
Rehabilitation offers social, health and economic advantages by preserving and
upgrading the private housing stock within the Borough. Moreover the existing character
of the area can be retained. There may nevertheless be occasions where redevelopment
presents a more practicable solution to a problem and in these circumstances the
Council will consider such proposals against the criteria defined in the policy. The
council will require clear evidence that social and environmental benefits significantly
contribute to sustainability objectives. Similarly where rehabilitation is not considered,
3.49 Vacant residential accommodation is a wasted resource which does not contribute to meeting housing need within the Borough. In order to ensure that such properties are brought up to a reasonable standard of re-occupation, the Council may take action utilising its statutory powers e.g. by serving Repair Notices or in exceptional cases, by the use of Compulsory Purchase Orders. The Council will work jointly with the Empty Homes Agency and other relevant bodies to reduce the number of vacant dwellings in the borough.

POLICY HP.4: DENSITY OF DEVELOPMENT

NEW RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT WILL BE EXPECTED TO BE AT A MINIMUM DENSITY OF 150 HABITABLE ROOMS PER HECTARE EXCEPT WHERE:

(i) THE EXISTING DENSITY, SCALE AND CHARACTER OF THE SURROUNDING AREA IS SUCH THAT IMPLEMENTATION OF THIS MINIMUM STANDARD IS LIKELY TO CAUSE DEMONSTRABLE HARM TO THE CHARACTER AND APPEARANCE OF THE AREA, OR

(ii) THE LIVING CONDITIONS OF NEIGHBOURING OCCUPIERS WILL BE UNACCEPTABLY AFFECTED BY LOSS OF LIGHT OR PRIVACY OR BY NOISE AND DISTURBANCE.

THE DENSITY RANGE OF RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT WILL BE RELATED TO LOCATION AND CAR PARKING IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE LOCATION/ DENSITY/PARKING MATRIX IN FIGURE 3.1.

Justification

3.50 Land available for residential development within the Borough is finite. It is essential that good use is made of whatever land is available. Government advice in PPG3 and the Mayor’s Draft London Plan, 2002 seeks to avoid low density housing in order to use land efficiently and reduce pressures on greenfield land. Density guidelines should be set which respect the character and scale of an area, provide good urban design and support local services and facilities. Strategic Planning Guidance for London and advice from the former LPAC supports a general minimum density in London of 150 habitable rooms per hectare.

3.51 Whilst the Council considers that density guidelines help to ensure the protection or creation of good quality residential environments, the principal means by which the Council will assess the environmental acceptability of a proposed residential development is by the use of performance related environmental guidelines (such as Policies BE.15, BE.16, BE.22, PE.2, PE.12, PE.13, PK.2, PK.3, LU.5) The Council will seek a more efficient use of the land in line with guidance set out in PPG3 whilst maintaining a good quality residential environment. If the Council considers that the density
standards may fail to maintain or enhance the environmental character of certain areas or certain exceptional circumstances prevail as set out in the policy, then the Council may consider relaxing the normal density standards. Proposals for residential development will be considered within the policies identified in Chapter 4, Built Environment Section of this Plan, and advice contained in the Council’s Supplementary Planning Guidance for New Residential Development.

3.52 Government planning guidance, including PPG3, 2000 and the Mayor’s Draft London Plan 2002, promotes higher density housing in and around locations with good public transport access, such as town centres and public transport corridors. This guidance promotes the re-introduction of housing into town centres and to include housing in mixed use development, in particular through Urban Village policies. The Government is also promoting greater flexibility in the application of off-street parking for housing. These standards should be reduced where public transport is good in order to enable higher density housing and to achieve improvements in urban design, which puts the needs of people and communities before those of the car. There is therefore an opportunity to provide higher density housing for those who choose it. This approach forms part of the Government’s aim to encourage sustainable patterns of living.

3.53 The Government considers that off-street parking occupies a higher percentage of residential development sites and adds to the price of housing. Reduced parking is particularly suitable for certain types of housing, such as for the elderly, students and single people; also where existing buildings are being converted to residential use. In some circumstances the Government does not consider it desirable to provide any off-street parking, such as in or near town centres and where public transport is good. In these locations car free housing should be encouraged.

3.54 Strategic Planning Guidance for London supports these aims and research undertaken by the former LPAC in the Sustainable Residential Quality Study, 1998, found that higher density housing can be provided consistent with the improvements of quality or standards, in particular if less parking is provided.

3.55 The Council supports this Guidance and research evidence and will seek to secure higher density housing in appropriate locations, subject to other Plan policies. In assessing whether a site is suited to higher density the Council will have regard to the actual walking distance to public transport services, the grain and character of the urban fabric and performance related environmental guidelines set out elsewhere in the Plan. Further advice on parking in residential developments is provided in PK.6 and in the Highways and Parking Supplementary Planning Guidance and in Figure 3.1.

3.56 The former LPAC have advised that a density standard of 200 habitable rooms per hectare or more could be achieved on suitable sites in a design led approach to new housing where one parking space is provided per unit. In car free developments this standard could be increased further to 300 habitable rooms per hectare or more. Reference should be made to policy HS.1, Figure 3.1 and the Supplementary Planning Guidance dealing with New Residential Development.
FIGURE 3.1 Location/ Density/ Parking Matrix

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PTAL Index</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Maximum Car Parking Provision</th>
<th>High 2-1 space per unit</th>
<th>Moderate 1.5-1 space per unit</th>
<th>Low Less than 1 space per unit</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4-6</td>
<td>Sites within town centres</td>
<td>300-500 hr/ha</td>
<td>200-400 hr/ha</td>
<td>250-450 hr/ha</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sites within 10 mins walking distance of a town centre (PedShed)</td>
<td>200-400 hr/ha</td>
<td>250-450 hr/ha</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2-3</td>
<td>Sites along transport corridors and sites close to but beyond 10 mins walk from a town centre</td>
<td>150-200 hr/ha</td>
<td>200-300 hr/ha</td>
<td>250-350 hr/ha</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-2</td>
<td>Currently remote sites</td>
<td>150-200 hr/ha</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>Some on-street Parking control</td>
<td>CPZ</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes

PTAL – Public Transport Accessibility Levels hr/ha – Habitable rooms per hectare
CPZ – Controlled Parking Zone

Shaded areas represent inappropriate relationships between location, parking and density e.g. schemes which are high density and provide a limited number of car parking spaces would be inappropriate in areas with poor public transport accessibility. Similarly schemes which are low density and provide a high number of car parking spaces would be inappropriate in areas with good public transport accessibility.

Density represents one of a number of considerations against which proposals will be assessed. Other considerations include the grain and character of the urban fabric and performance related environmental guidelines set out in the plan. In town centre locations developments above 500 hrpha may be positively considered where they are car-free and in CPZ locations and comply with all other relevant Plan policies.

Many eastern parts of the Borough are isolated in terms of employment sites, retail outlets and key facilities and are located a substantial distance away from good public transport facilities and therefore have a low PTAL level. Additionally Mitcham (and surrounding areas) do not currently have a controlled parking zone and therefore the Council is not in a position to restrict on-street parking resulting from new development in these locations. This justifies many eastern parts of the Borough being unsuitable for application of the higher density ranges. Conversely Wimbledon town centre is characterised by good public transport facilities and local services and therefore attains a high PTA level making it more suited to the application of higher density ranges.
POLICY HP.5: FLAT CONVERSIONS; SIZE OF ORIGINAL UNIT

THE CONVERSION OF SINGLE DWELLINGS TO SELF CONTAINED OR NON-Self Contained units of accommodation will be permitted, provided that the proposal would not lead to an unacceptable shortage of small family dwellings locally.

Justification

3.57 The Council is keen to encourage the provision of smaller units of accommodation especially those suitable for single person households. However it is also keen to ensure the continued presence of larger family accommodation in the Borough.

3.58 Bedsits and other shared non-self-contained accommodation can provide a relatively low cost and easily accessible form of housing. However, this type of accommodation is often of a poor quality. In order to ensure that bedsits and other shared non self contained accommodation are of a satisfactory quality, standards will be set to ensure basic amenity and safety provision. The Council considers that Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs) play a significant role in meeting a particular housing need. As such the Council will resist their loss where there is an identified need to retain existing HMOs.

POLICY HP.6: FLAT CONVERSIONS: RETENTION OF UNITS

PROPOSALS FOR THE RESIDENTIAL CONVERSION OF EXISTING SELF CONTAINED OR NON SELF CONTAINED DWELLINGS THAT WILL LEAD TO A NET LOSS OF RESIDENTIAL UNITS WILL NOT BE PERMITTED, UNLESS IT CAN BE DEMONSTRATED THAT THERE IS A NEED FOR LARGER FAMILY ACCOMMODATION IN THE AREA.

Justification

3.59 The Government has set targets for the number of additional dwellings that need to be provided over the plan period (see policies ST.11 & HP.1), conversion of appropriate single dwellings to a number of smaller units can help to meet some of this demand. The majority of household growth will be in single person households, the former LPAC's Single Person Household Study (1998) highlighted some of the implications of this growth for London. Conversion of single dwellings has been identified as a way of meeting some of this household growth.

3.60 This policy is consistent with current national planning guidance PPG3 (March 2000), and regional planning guidance RPG9 which states that a range of dwelling types and sizes should be provided, including alternative forms of tenure, in order to meet the needs of all sectors of the community and to plan for balanced communities. The Council has identified a range of needs through its Housing Needs Study 1999 and an update to this survey in 2001. In particular there is a need for smaller units of accommodation suitable for the single person household. PPG3 seeks the efficient use of urban land, by seeking to retain those properties already converted to smaller units, this can help to maintain an efficient use of existing residential areas.

3.61 Whilst the Council wishes to retain properties that have been converted to smaller units, there may be a specific housing need for larger units in certain circumstances. In such circumstances reverting back to a single dwelling may be permitted where there is an identified shortage of accommodation in the area. This may be the case for example where there are large or extended families requiring accommodation.
POLICY HP.7: ACCOMMODATION FOR TRAVELLERS

Proposals for Travellers’ sites will be assessed having regard to the following criteria:

(i) The effects on the amenity of local residents, particularly in relation to noise;

(ii) Traffic implications, particularly in relation to proposals for accommodation for travelling showpeople;

(iii) The visual impacts of the scheme and any proposals to mitigate them;

(iv) The proximity to shops, schools and other community facilities.

Justification

3.62 Guidance in DoE Circular 1/94 ‘Gypsy Sites and Planning’, states that local authorities should make suitable locational and/or criteria based policies against which to decide planning applications. This policy supports equity aims of UDP. The Council has one travellers site at Weir Road for which a waiting list exists. Circular 1/94, RPG3 and PPG12 all require the assessment of accommodation needed to meet travellers needs in connection with any policy for their accommodation. Merton will be commissioning an assessment of travellers needs to establish the scope and extent of the need in the Borough.

HOUSING NEEDS

POLICY HN.1: AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Any proposal for residential development of 15 units or more on a suitable site will be required to make provision for affordable housing on that site, as part of the proposed development. At least 30% of the total number of new dwellings on a residential site that falls within the above threshold will be affordable housing.

Affordable housing should meet the needs of households on a range of low and moderate incomes who cannot afford to rent or buy open market housing.

Justification

3.63 PPG3 (March 2000) recommends that local planning authorities address the community’s need for affordable housing by negotiating with developers for the provision of affordable housing which contributes towards the creation of mixed and balanced communities. The Guidance requires local planning authorities to ensure that new housing developments help to secure a better social mix by avoiding the creation of large areas of housing for a particular social income group. The Guidance stresses that where an affordable housing requirement exists this should be provided as part of the proposed development and that failure to do so without exceptional circumstances could justify the refusal of planning permission. This Guidance reflects other guidance to promote sustainable neighbourhoods with a mix of uses and access to a range of facilities locally. Other Plan policies provide further guidance on these aims.