TOURISM

3.156 Over the past few years tourism has made a major contribution to the economy at both national and local levels. It is accepted that this trend will continue and that more facilities to cater for the needs of tourists will be required. Central London is a natural attraction but pressures on the availability of hotel accommodation and the over-use of tourist attractions has given rise to the need for some de-centralisation.

3.157 Merton is conveniently situated to help provide additional sustainable tourist facilities and RPG3 favours the development of new hotel accommodation and tourist facilities in areas with good transport links to central London. There are good surface and underground rail links between, for example, Wimbledon and Central London, and the use of these facilities could be further extended. The Borough has its own tourist attractions, which offer potential for further development of the tourist trade. The Merton Tourism/Visitor Strategy, 1999, also recognises the scope for attracting more visitors to the Borough whilst maintaining sustainable benefits for the local community.

POLICY T.1: HOTELS, GUEST HOUSES AND BED AND BREAKFAST

DEVELOPMENT OF LARGE HOTEL FACILITIES WILL BE DIRECTED TO TOWN CENTRES AND WHERE PUBLIC TRANSPORT LINKS ARE GOOD.

PROPOSALS FOR HOTELS, GUEST HOUSES OR BED AND BREAKFAST ACCOMMODATION IN TOWN CENTRES AND IN OTHER LOCATIONS WILL BE PERMITTED PROVIDED THAT:

(i) THE SIZE AND CHARACTER OF THE SITE OR BUILDING ARE SUITABLE FOR THE PROPOSED USE.

(ii) THE DEVELOPMENT WILL BE COMPATIBLE WITH THE CHARACTER, APPEARANCE AND HERITAGE VALUES OF THE AREA.

(iii) THE RESIDENTIAL AMENITIES OF LOCAL RESIDENTS WILL NOT BE HARMED, BY WAY OF NOISE, DISTURBANCE, AND LOSS OF LIGHT OR PRIVACY.

(iv) VEHICULAR ACCESS TO AND FROM THE HIGHWAY WILL BE SAFE.

(v) IN LOCATIONS WITH POOR PUBLIC TRANSPORT LINKS THE CAR PARKING FACILITIES WILL BE IN ACCORDANCE WITH SCHEDULE 6.

THE BENEFITS OF THE PROPOSAL TO EMPLOYMENT AND THE LOCAL ECONOMY WILL BE BALANCED AGAINST THE ABOVE CRITERIA.
Chapter 3 • Living and Working in Merton

Justification

3.158 As industrial and commercial activities continue to develop, there is considerable demand from the business community for suitable hotel facilities. There are currently only 5 hotels (as defined by the English Tourism Council) in Merton ranging from budget to luxury accommodation, all are currently operating at near full capacity during the week and this factor, linked with the development of tourist attractions, should facilitate the development of viable hotels. The Council’s Tourism / Visitor Strategy, 1999, identifies a need for more hotel accommodation in the range which will appeal to both business visitors for week stays and tourists for weekend visits and enable the hotel accommodation sector to be more viable and sustainable. Certain facilities provided to the guests should also be made available to the local community, this will help enhance the quality of life for local residents.

3.159 An examination of the potential for tourist accommodation in the Borough shows that there is a demand for low cost accommodation in the form of Bed and Breakfast facilities, particularly in the Wimbledon area. The Plan recognises the importance of retaining residential accommodation to meet the needs of the people of the Borough and normally this accommodation should not be lost to meet the needs of hotel and guest house development. There may be exceptions to this and the Council will need to assess each proposal carefully and on its merits and having regard to other policies within the Plan.

3.160 In determining the location of hotel facilities, good public transport services to Central London are an important factor. In order that the local economy receives maximum benefit, hotels should also have good access to the local tourist attractions. Where accommodation is to be provided outside town centre locations, they should, subject to their suitability on traffic and environmental grounds, be adjacent to the secondary road network and not local roads, where their presence could give rise to serious problems.

POLICY T.2: DEVELOPMENT & EXPANSION OF TOURIST ATTRACTIONS

A PROPOSAL THAT WILL INVOLVE DEVELOPMENT OR EXPANSION OF A TOURIST ATTRACTION WILL BE PERMITTED PROVIDED THAT:

(i) THE SIZE AND CHARACTER OF THE SITE OR BUILDING ARE SUITABLE FOR THE PROPOSED USE.

(ii) IT WILL BE COMPATIBLE WITH THE CHARACTER, APPEARANCE AND HERITAGE VALUES OF THE SITE, BUILDING OR AREA.

(iii) THE RESIDENTIAL AMENITIES OF LOCAL RESIDENTS WILL NOT BE HARMED BY WAY OF NOISE, DISTURBANCE, LOSS OF LIGHT OR PRIVACY.

(iv) THERE WILL BE GOOD ACCESS AND LINKS, OR OPPORTUNITY FOR GOOD ACCESS AND LINKS, TO MODES OF TRANSPORT OTHER THAN THE PRIVATE VEHICLE.

(v) VEHICULAR ACCESS TO AND FROM THE HIGHWAY WOULD BE SAFE.

THE BENEFITS OF THE PROPOSAL TO EMPLOYMENT OR TO THE LOCAL ECONOMY WILL BE BALANCED AGAINST THE ABOVE CRITERIA.
3.161 There are a number of high quality tourist/visitor attractions within the Borough and it is considered that many of these attractions are of interest to visitors from outside of the Borough, as well as providing a variety of facilities for the local community. In order to contribute to a sustainable and pleasant environment and continue the provision of facilities for local people, developments of an appropriate nature will be encouraged especially where there is particular emphasis on local heritage. The appropriateness of the location will also depend on the scale and nature of the facility, ease of access by sustainable forms of transport and the use proposed. In seeking to increase the use of public transport and improve and extend public transport services, the council will take account of existing tourist facilities and the numbers of visitors they generate.

**POLICY T.3: THE LOSS OF TOURIST ACCOMMODATION AND ATTRACTIONS**

**ALTERNATIVE USES FOR EXISTING TOURIST FACILITIES WIL BE PERMITTED ONLY WHERE IT CAN BE DEMONSTRATED THAT THE EXISTING ATTRACTION IS NO LONGER VIALB OR DOES NOT PROVIDE FACILITIES FOR THE LOCAL COMMUNITY.**

3.162 In order to maintain the benefits of tourism to the local economy and the quality of life in the Borough, existing attractions and accommodation will be protected. The majority of attractions in Merton are related to sport, heritage and culture, although there are a variety of other attractions which add value to these. The continued provision of existing locally based, small attractions benefits the local community in terms of jobs, provides an educational resource, a variety of facilities and contributes to the quality of life of the residents in general as well as providing an interesting addition to the visitor experience for people coming from outside the Borough. Exceptions to this policy will only be made where the attraction is no longer viable and provides very little or no facilities for the local community. Policies contained within the Leisure and Recreation and Town Centres and Shopping Chapters will also need to be considered in relation to the loss of existing tourist/visitor facilities.