

Morden Town Centre Regeneration

Project fact-sheet and
Frequently Asked Questions

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MoreMorden – Q and A's

Q. Who will benefit from the regeneration?

A. The regeneration will benefit those who live, work, visit or have businesses in the town centre, and surrounding area. Improvements to the town centre will result in better choice and wider appeal to both residents and visitors to Morden. People, including passengers using the Underground and buses, will want to spend time in Morden rather than just pass through. This in turn will help create a thriving business centre and re-capture a local economic resource that is currently missing in the town.

Q. What range of services and facilities will the regeneration create?

A. The various regeneration proposals will lead to improved community and leisure facilities and services for existing residents, visitors and people who come and live in the town in the future. The council is looking to extend the variety of uses and services in the town centre with the possibility for more retail and commercial space on the ground floor, whilst providing additional residential space above. As part of the consultation process the council will welcome ideas from everyone in Morden. We want to hear about the facilities people would like to see to make their visit to Morden more enjoyable.

Q. How will it affect me?

A. It is too early to accurately predict how the project will directly affect those living and working in Morden. Any disturbance will be kept to a minimum wherever possible and the council will do its very best to keep the people of Morden informed at all stages.

Q. How can I keep up to date with the latest information about Morden Town centre regeneration?

A. The Merton Council website will be updated regularly and you will have the opportunity to sign up to an e-mail bulletin. We will also be providing information through My Merton, the local press, leaflets and newsletters. The most up to date information will be at www.merton.gov.uk/moreMorden

Q. What is regeneration and what does it mean for Morden?

A. The Centre for Local Economic Strategies describes regeneration as “seeking to bring about a lasting improvement in the economic, physical, social and environmental conditions of an area.”

Q. But what does regeneration mean for Morden?

A. It is about reviving Morden town centre by making it into a more attractive destination for a growing population to live, work, shop and socialise. It's about making the most of Morden's role as a vibrant public transport hub, its green spaces and building on its heritage. The Council is keen to build on its current strengths, for example by linking the town centre with Morden Hall Park and Morden Park.

Q. What is moreMorden and the vision?

A. The council and its partners are currently developing a draft vision for Morden town centre. The regeneration project is branded as moreMorden. The draft vision document looks at a range of opportunities that could be available to help take Morden town centre forward and make it into the distinctive and vibrant town that it deserves to be. The proposals are by no means 'set in stone' but are designed to get local people talking about what they feel their town needs and whether the ideas in the vision can go some way to achieving that. The vision document aims to consider possible regeneration opportunities for Morden town centre over a period of the next 15 years.

The consultation is running for six weeks commencing 1 September 2008 will ask residents, visitors and businesses what they think of the draft moreMorden vision. Further opportunities for consultation will be organised as more detailed development options are put through the masterplanning process during 2009/10.

Q. What is the planning framework?

A This is the technical planning policy and guidelines, which will be developed by council officers in consultation with its partners. It will influence how the town centre's regeneration and infrastructure is shaped. The planning framework for Morden will become part of the emerging Local Development Framework (LDF), which provides the planning strategy for the whole of Merton. The LDF will be the set of planning policies and outline development options against which future planning applications will be assessed. Basically it will show in more detail what will go where in Morden plus the associated transport/public realm and other improvements. The LDF Core Strategy document will be shaped from January 2009 to April 2010 and run parallel with the moreMorden project.

Q. What is the masterplan?

A This is a more detailed and visual representation of the planning framework and will show what any new development and infrastructure in Morden is likely to look like and how it would fit together. This will be developed by the council and relevant partners throughout January and June 2009 and will be based on the moreMorden vision and planning framework.

Q. What parts of Morden will it affect?

A. The parts of Morden that the regeneration will affect will change and evolve as the project moves through its three phases:

- **Phase 1:** The creation of the moreMorden vision (the current phase of the regeneration)
Due to be finalised by January 2009
- **Phase 2:** The planning framework. January 2009 – April 2010
- **Phase 3:** The masterplan. January – June 2009

Current thinking is that the vision should focus on the town centre, but consideration will be given to improving links to assets located outside the town centre.

We will be asking the public's views on the moreMorden vision during a six-week consultation taking place during September. The council will welcome ideas from everyone in Morden, including businesses and young people. We want to hear about the facilities people would like to see to make their visit to Morden more enjoyable and attractive.

Q. When will it start?

A The process starts now with the creation of a vision with larger scale regeneration anticipated in two years time. It is difficult to determine exact timescales at this early stage due to a number of factors such as funding, market conditions, public opinion, approvals and availability of land. The council's preference is to phase the regeneration of the town centre (this could be subject to change), through a short medium and long-term programme:

- Short term programme: two years
- Medium term programme: two to six years
- Long term programme: six years and onward

The short-term programme aims to put into place and promote the regeneration proposals identified in the moreMorden vision. It will seek to provide improvements to the public realm* improving its relationship with transport arrangements.

Finally, it is hoped that it will include a series of town centre improvements, which can be undertaken in advance of the wider regeneration.

Q. *What is the Public Realm?

A The public realm is essentially the spaces between buildings. Publicly and privately owned streets, rights-of-ways, parks and other publicly accessible open spaces, and facilities that all members of the public can access and utilise.

Q. How long will it take to regenerate the town centre?

A. The regeneration of the town centre will take place over a period of 15 years, however this is subject to change as it is dependent on a number of factors, which are outside the control of the council.

Q. Is there an opportunity for me to have my say about the regeneration?

A. Yes, a consultation is running for six weeks commencing 1 September 2008 to ask residents, visitors and businesses what they think of the draft moreMorden vision. Further opportunities for consultation will be organised as more detailed development options are put through the masterplanning process during 2009/10.

Q. How will I be consulted?

- A. Details of the consultation will be available in the local papers and on the council's website from 1 September 2008. We will be using a number of consultation methods including sending out questionnaires to local households, displays and workshops with partners such as Transport for London and the National Trust as well as with representative groups such as the Interfaith Forum. Further information will be available on our website at the beginning of September.

Q. You have already asked us about the regeneration of Morden in the past, are you using this information?

- A. In 2006 and 2007 we consulted you on the Local Development Framework (LDF) and through Mission for Merton, both in which you told us that you wanted to regenerate Morden to have better shopping and leisure facilities. This information, as well as the views of planning and regeneration experts has been used to shape the draft vision so far. We are now asking you if you think the aims and objectives we are proposing are the right direction for the future development of Morden.

Q. Will there be building work in the town centre?

- A. Ultimately, yes. But it's too early to say when and how much at this stage, it will depend on the moreMorden vision following the consultation, Masterplan and the phasing of developments in response to market conditions and developer interest.

Q. Will the high street become pedestrianised?

- A. The future of London Road will be guided by the moreMorden vision, planning framework and the Masterplan, consultation with partners and available funding. It is currently unlikely that London Road will be pedestrianised, as it forms part of the TfL strategic road network and functions as part of Morden's transport interchange.

However, the look and layout of the street could be vastly improved through the removal of pedestrian barriers, better quality surface materials and calming of the through traffic. A *shared surface space could be a better option, which would increase the amount of useable public space between the civic centre and underground station. We wish to recreate a High Street for people and not continue to give such a high priority to the car.

*shared surface is roadspace shared by both pedestrians and other vehicles which seek to create a safe environment which provide priority for pedestrians. A nearby example of a shared space street is the St Johns Road shopping area at Clapham Junction. This is a bus and pedestrian only zone, a model that could work well for London Road, Morden.

Q. Will the bus stops be moved?

- A. The location of the bus stops and bus standing area are the responsibility of TfL. In consultation with TfL, we will seek to retain the bus stops as close to the underground station as possible – maintaining a good interchange facility. However, we will look, as a minimum, to relocate the bus standing area to improve the visual appearance, environment and character of the town centre.

Q. How will the regeneration be funded?

- A. The funding of the regeneration project will rely upon attracting private finance to fund the purchase of land (where required) and construction/building works. Where the council is a landowner it anticipates it will work with major stakeholders to help attract and secure the private sector funding. It is important to remember that it is hoped that this funding will pay for improvements to the public realm and other benefits the council wishes to deliver in order to improve Morden. Quite simply, there is a direct correlation between the amount of development, and the amount of funding that can be secured through planning obligations for regeneration and local community benefits.

Q. What will happen to car parking in Morden as the result of the regeneration?

- A. Once the consultation on the draft moreMorden vision is completed and the project moves towards developing a planning framework, parking will form a major consideration of the regeneration of Morden. Therefore we are a year or two away from looking in depth at this important part of the town's future, however we do recognise it will be fundamental in brining forward an improved town centre.

Q. What building heights are proposed?

A. The consultation will run for six weeks commencing 1 September 2008 and will ask the public what building heights people feel are appropriate to Morden. The heights of buildings will be determined based upon a balance between development viability and public expectation.

Q. How much new residential accommodation will you be proposing?

A. At this stage nothing has been fixed, however there is an opportunity to strengthen Morden's economic viability as a town centre by increasing the residential population at the centre. Increased local population is good for local business and excellent public transport links and local amenities in the town centre make urban living and car-free, or reduced car developments a viable option. Increasing the number of dwellings in Morden town centre does not necessarily mean building lots of flats or towers. There are many ways of achieving higher density development whilst retaining some suburban characteristics of the area. Apartments would be the predominant housing type for the town centre, though there are many sites suitable of accommodating higher density housing in the format of town houses, mews houses as well as flats above shops on the periphery of the town centre.

Morden has the capacity to provide anything between 500-1500 new residential units. This is around a quarter of the borough's new homes target for 2010 – 2025.

The moreMorden vision consultation (due to start 1 September) will ask for your views on residential development and the idea of increasing the number of residential units in the town centre.

Q. What is the difference between “high density” and “higher density”?

A. The draft moreMorden vision recognises that Morden is currently a low-density suburban centre with a lot of potential for growth because of its good transport links and underdeveloped sites in the town centre. A key aim of the moreMorden vision is to provide extra residential accommodation in the town centre. The vision doesn't state that the strategy is to provide 'high' density housing, but simply 'higher density' i.e. more than what currently exists.

There is a difference between 'high density' and high building heights. It is possible to provide high-density housing in a low-mid height development. It is also possible to provide higher density housing in a way that respects Morden's suburban characteristics – yet provides future growth in the town centre.

The moreMorden vision consultation (running for six weeks commencing 1 September 2008) will ask for your views on residential development and the idea of increasing the number of residential units in the town centre.

Q. What is the current planning policy relating to density?

A. The London Plan (policy 3A.2) sets out a density range of up to 700 habitable rooms per hectare (hr/ha) for Morden town centre. This density range is subject to appropriateness of the local context.

Although the London Plan has identified this amount, the council is keen to establish a more suitable density range for Morden by listening to local needs. The current maximum building heights upon which we are seeking people's opinions would result in a density below the London Plan's 700 figure mentioned above. The council think this is a good starting place for discussion. The first stage in determining a suitable development density will be from the information received from the draft moreMorden vision consultation, which will run for six weeks commencing 1 September 2008.

Q Why do we need to consider high-density buildings in Morden?

A Our recent economic research indicates that the dominance of family housing is unable to maintain the facilities and services in the centre of Morden.

By introducing different residential options through the introduction of flats above shops, the town centre will provide for an underrepresented market in the area, which will lead to spending power in the town centre. A residential mix will also promote a more balanced and sustainable community.

Developing sites at “higher densities” also generates the opportunity for the council to negotiate more money through planning obligations that can be reinvested in the town centre to deliver public realm improvements and other regeneration and community benefits the people Morden wish to have. There is therefore a direct link between density of development and the ability to deliver improvements, new facilities and regeneration as a whole.

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